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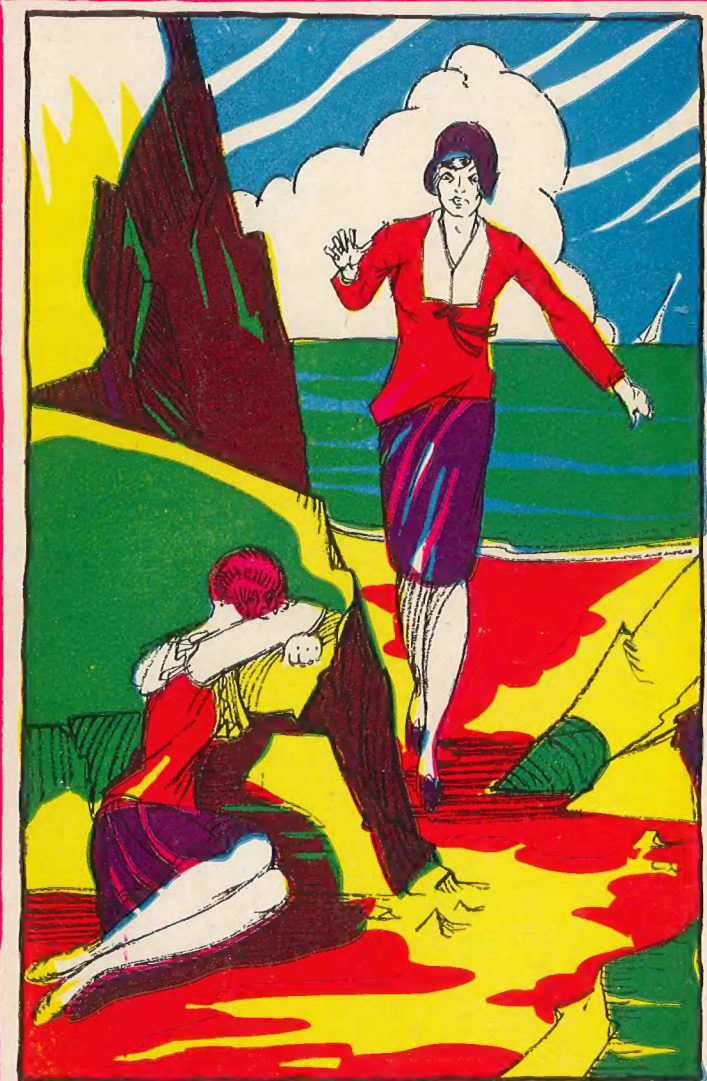
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THE
CAMPFIRE
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ON
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THE CAMPFIRE GIRLS ON CALIBAN ISLAND



**THE CAMPFIRE GIRLS
ON CALIBAN ISLAND**

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ON CALIBAN ISLAND**

BY JULIANNE DEVRIES

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CHAPTER I

"Pardon me young lady but is this corner a street car stop?"

The speaker, a middle-aged, dignified-appearing man, raised his hat as Dolores Rodriguez approached the corner on which he was standing.

"It is," she smiled, "and so is every other square inch of track in town."

The man looked perplexed. A faint suspicion that Dolores was having fun at his expense was beginning to grow on him.

"I don't understand," he replied frigidly, "I merely wish to ascertain if the car stopping at this corner will take me to Sloane Street."

"Eventually," replied Dolores. "How long have you been waiting?"

"About five minutes," answered the man. "Why?"

"Oh, you've just begun!" laughed Dolores. "You'll get used to it after the second or third week."

"Your impertinence heightens my pleasure in the prospect of leaving Oakdale this afternoon," the stranger retorted acridly.

"Not if you're waiting for a street car you won't," smiled Dolores.

"Won't what?" asked the stranger.

"Won't leave Oakdale this afternoon," replied

Dolores, and then, seeing the stranger's bewilderment, she dropped her attitude of banter and explained.

"You see," she continued, "the power that is used by the street cars here isn't exactly reliable. It—it goes blooey every half hour or so."

"Blooey?" repeated the perplexed man.

"Yes," replied Dolores, "blooey. You know, blah, blotto, on the fritz, out. In other words, where there was power before, there is no power now."

"Am I to infer, then, that the service has been temporarily incapacitated due to some mishap?" inquired the stranger.

"Incapacitated, yes; temporarily, no," smiled Dolores. "It's been like that for ages. You'd really save time if you walked and Sloane Street isn't far from here—just a few blocks."

"Thank you for your information, young lady," smiled the man, "and your advice. Can you direct me to Sloane Street?"

"I can do better than that!" laughed Dolores. "I can take you there!"

"Splendid!" cried the stranger and with a gallant gesture, proffered his arm.

As the two walked down the street, Dolores did not see Anita Brooks and Mabel Chapman as they emerged from a store across the street, nor did she see her two friends stop and stare at her as she walked blithely along beside the elderly stranger. To Dolores it was a lark, but to her astounded friends, watching her with open mouths, it was quite another matter.

Just two hours before Dolores encountered the affable old man with whom she was now walking, Alice Blake, daughter of Sergeant Blake of the Oakdale police force, dashed wildly into Charles Brook's jewelry store in search of Anita Brooks, her eyes round with excitement.

But Anita wasn't there.

"She went over to Dolores' house, I guess," Mr. Brooks told the excited Alice, who forthwith set off in that direction but Anita wasn't there either.

"Why no," Mrs. Rodriguez responded to Alice's breathless query, "Dolores isn't home. Anita and Mabel were here a little while ago looking for her too but they went right away."

The next two hours Alice spent in going from one place to another, all of them places of rendezvous for various enterprises, but her search was unfruitful until, having made the rounds, she gravitated back to the little jewelry store operated by Anita's father. It was almost supper time and Alice knew she could not tarry lest she be late, but her news was of such magnitude that she felt as though she would burst if she had to go another second without divulging her secret. As she was about to enter the store, she met Anita and Mabel coming out.

"Where on earth have you two been hiding?" she demanded excitedly. "Just today, of all days you have to go and make yourselves as scarce as a snake's eyebrows!"

"Keep your blood pressure down, girlie, keep

your blood pressure down," soothed Mabel. "What's all the hue and cry about?"

"We're going to the grocery," announced Anita, "fall in and unburden your soul."

"I'll go as far as the store with you," replied Alice, "and then I've got to go home. In the meantime, lend an attentive ear."

"We're lending," answered Mabel, "shoot."

"You know that big house on Sloane Street, the one that Dr. Tucker used to live in?" began Alice. Mabel and Anita nodded.

"Well," continued Alice, "my Dad told me this afternoon that it had been rented."

"Hooray," Anita replied drily, "prosperity has returned."

"Interesting, very interesting, if true," Mabel answered. "When I have time, I shall do my utmost to get excited about it."

"If you two numb-skulls will shut up for a second," announced Alice, "I'll endeavor to enlighten you."

"I'm all ears," replied Anita.

"So that's why you're letting your hair grow!" giggled Mabel.

"Let me know when the so-called comedy is over," sighed Alice, "and I'll continue."

"Well for heaven's sake, go on!" exclaimed Anita impatiently.

"As I was saying," continued Alice, "the Tucker place was rented this afternoon and Dad says the men who rented it are agents for Luigi Halboro the big upstate gangster!"

"Fan mah brow!" gasped Mabel. "Honest?"

"Honest," affirmed Alice.

"Well, why doesn't he arrest 'em?" asked Anita.

"Since when is it a crime to rent a house?" demanded Alice loftily. "They haven't done anything wrong—yet."

"What do you suppose they came to Oakdale for?" Mabel asked.

"The Chamber of Commerce probably invited 'em!" scoffed Anita. "What do you suppose a bunch of crooks would come to a town as small as this for?"

"That's what Dad says," replied Alice. "He thinks they came to hide until whatever they did blows over and they can go back to Chicago."

"Of course!" answered Anita, proud that her implied theory concurred with that of Sergeant Blake's.

The girls had reached the grocery store and were standing near the entrance while Alice concluded the details of her startling announcement.

"Dad pointed one of 'em out to me this morning," she went on, "and you'd never think he was a gangster. He looks more like a quiet, dignified, elderly business man."

"Elderly?" asked Mabel. Alice nodded. "Not interested," she announced. "Ask your Dad if any of 'em are young and good looking and I'll get myself kidnaped."

"Silly!" sniffed Anita.

"Jealous!" Mabel retorted.

"I ought to get first choice," began Alice when

her eyes suddenly beheld the clock on the wall of the grocery store. It was a quarter past six.

"Omigosh!" she gasped. "See you later. G'bye!" and, with a wave of her hand, she raced down the street toward home.

"Send the body back and I'll have it stuffed!" called Mabel.

"Don't bother!" yelled Alice over her shoulder, "that's what I'm going home for!"

Dolores had gone to spend the day with an aunt in the nearby city of Newburg and as she alighted from the bus on her return to Oakdale later that afternoon she suddenly decided to take a longer route home in order to stop in at the garage owned by Lenore Rivers' father and walk the rest of the way home with Lenore who was taking care of some of her father's office work.

As Dolores crossed the street after alighting from the bus, she encountered the perplexed old gentleman and thus it was that with Alice's news still fresh in their minds, Anita and Mabel emerged from the grocery store in time to see Dolores on the arm of the elderly stranger turn the corner of Sloane Street, and not knowing that Dolores was on her way to Rivers' Garage, which was situated at the other end of the thoroughfare, they immediately inferred that Dolores was being lured away by the gangsters. Alice had said that the fugitive from Chicago was a dignified appearing old gentleman who might easily pass for a retired business man and

the stranger with whom Dolores was walking answered that description perfectly.

Mabel and Anita looked at each other. They knew without speaking what was in each other's mind.

"What'll we do?" asked Mabel helplessly.

"Follow 'em, of course," replied Anita. "Come on!"

Keeping at a discreet distance behind Dolores and her new-found companion, Mabel and Anita followed them, walking on the narrow strip of lawn between the curb and the sidewalk so that they should make no sound lest they be discovered.

Sloane Street was a long, wide, tree-lined avenue. Large, rolling, well-kept lawns ran down from the spacious, comfortable-looking houses set far back from the street to the sidewalk's edge. High hedgerows surrounded most of the homes with here and there an iron fence or a stone wall protecting the property of others. The large, old-fashioned house formerly occupied by Dr. Tucker and vacant since his death some months ago, stood about halfway down the street and was one of the few homes surrounded by a high stone wall.

Unaware that she was being followed, Dolores walked gayly along, chatting with the affable old man. As they neared the former residence of the deceased physician, Anita and Mabel increased their pace in order to be close at hand when Dolores, as they were positive she would,

discovered the old man's plans and would scream for help.

"Ready, now!" whispered Mabel to Anita. "He's going to try it any minute!"

"Duck behind this tree," replied Anita. "If we catch him off his guard and surprise him, it'll be easier."

Dolores and the old gentleman came to a halt before the Tucker place and as their backs were still turned, Mabel and Anita took advantage of the opportunity to scurry forward a few yards to the shelter of a tree closer to their quarry.

Silently, and with bated breath and tense nerves the two girls waited for the stranger to suddenly seize Dolores and drag her through the heavy iron gate in the wall. The seconds passed like hours and as Mabel balanced the can of peas recently purchased at the grocery, ready to heave it at the stranger's head at his first untoward move, she prayed that she would not hit Dolores by mistake.

The two chatted for a moment and then suddenly the waiting girls tensed themselves with a sharp intake of breath. The man was taking his hands from his coat pockets! In another moment he would seize Dolores! Mabel's heart seemed to stop beating. She could stand it no longer. With a wild whoop she leaped forward and threw the heavy can with all the force she could command at the old man. Instinctively both the stranger and Dolores ducked and a moment later canned green peas were trickling down the wrought iron gate on which the can

had become impaled. Mabel was quick to follow up her first attack. With a shout to Anita to follow her, she made a flying tackle for the stranger's legs and missed. Anita, who was following close on Mabel's heels, tripped over her fallen friend and they both went sprawling on the pavement.

For a moment Dolores was terrified, not knowing what had happened, but as she recognized Mabel and Anita as they rolled over on the pavement, her bewilderment knew no bounds. The elderly stranger stood with his back to the wall, his face purple with rage and indignation.

"What is the meaning of this, you hoydens?" he shouted as the dishevelled girls picked themselves up from the sidewalk. "I demand an explanation!"

Dolores could not refrain from laughing at the ridiculous sight the two girls presented as they stood there and while the old man stormed and Dolores gasped for breath, Mabel and Anita tidied themselves up as best they could, still, however, keeping a wary eye on the stranger. They knew they had spoiled whatever plot he had had for kidnaping Dolores, but they remained on the alert nevertheless. Finally Dolores managed to speak between gasps.

"Whatever got into you two?" she demanded. "Going out for track and football and getting in a little practice?"

The girls remained silent.

"If this was intended as a joke," growled the

stranger as he observed that Dolores was acquainted with his would-be assailants, "perhaps the police will find it more of a laughing matter than I!" and turning his back on the girls, he pushed open the iron gate and banging it shut again with a clang that woke the echoes, he stamped angrily up the walk to the house.

"D'you suppose he'll call the police?" asked Mabel.

"Of course not, stupid," replied Anita testily. "Didn't he come up here to get away from 'em?"

"I wish you'd let me in on this," demanded Dolores. "What, if any, seems to be the big idea?"

"I'll have to get another can of peas," murmured Anita as she beheld the impaled tin. "I hope the grocery store isn't closed. What time is it?"

"It's quarter of seven," replied Dolores consulting her wrist watch, "and I suppose that explains everything."

"Well, you see, it's like this," began Mabel, and as the girls retraced their steps along Sloane Street, she told the surprised and amused Dolores of Alice's information and their deductions therefrom.

"What a fine bunch of detectives you are!" she laughed when Mabel, assisted by Anita, had finished. "Just because you caught the men that stole Mr. Jordan's ruby last summer——"

"Aw, forget it!" muttered Mabel. "How do you know he isn't a gangster?"

"Because," smiled Dolores, "he told me his name, and the senior partner of the oldest law firm in Chicago doesn't go in for gangstering in addition to his regular business!"

CHAPTER II

Immediately after supper that evening, Anita and Mabel hurried around to Alice's house. It was not so much to see Alice that they went as it was to find out, if possible, from Alice whether or not the elderly stranger had carried out his threat of complaining to the police. Dolores had told them that she had given the man her name and they knew that Sergeant Blake would question his daughter first as a friend of Dolores' in order to get to the bottom of the affair.

But evidently there had been no complaint or if there had, Sergeant Blake had made no mention of it to his daughter. Anita and Mabel had agreed to make no mention of the matter to Alice in order to avoid as long as possible the sarcasm and kidding they knew would be forthcoming when Alice got the story from Dolores.

August was fast yielding to September, but the evenings were still warm and as the girls sat on the front porch of the Blake home, Alice suggested that they walk down to the corner for a soda. Immediately Mabel and Anita began to advance countless reasons why they shouldn't, studiously avoiding the real reason, which was fear of encountering Dolores and the subsequent exposure of the afternoon's fiasco.

"Want to get indigestion?" Mabel demanded severely.

"Or look like that tub?" asked Anita, pointing an accusing finger at Mabel.

Alice was surprised and, of course, immediately suspected that something was brewing, for it was entirely unlike either of the two girls to develop such sudden concern for her. However, in order not to arouse her friends' suspicions and in the hope that by playing 'possum she might be able to pick up some hint as to what Mabel and Anita had up their sleeves, she pretended to give heed to their warnings.

"You're right," she answered seriously, "I have been eating too many sweets. I'd better cut down before it's too late."

"Atta girl," congratulated Mabel, "if I'm gonna be fat, I don't want any competition."

Anita sighed with relief and nudged Mabel. The ruse worked, or so they thought, but their secret joy was short-lived for a second later the telephone rang.

"It's for you, Alice," called her mother a moment later.

"If it's Nicky Poth," teased Anita as Alice went into the house, "tell him to come right over. We won't mind!"

When the school term ended in June, the Poth family planned to spend the summer in the mountains, but when all was in readiness to leave no trace of young Nick Poth could be found. After a thorough and diligent search of Oakdale and its outskirts, Sergeant Blake

finally found the missing youth in the basement of his own home where, after a long heart to heart talk with the police officer the boy confessed that he could not bear the thought of leaving Oakdale—and Alice—during what, for him, would be an endless summer, and so he had hidden himself.

Sergeant Blake had finally convinced him that, as her father, he would see to it that Alice would still be in Oakdale when the Poths returned and induced the boy to accompany his family. Later that same day when, carried back to the days of their youth by Nick's unsuccessful attempt, Mr. and Mrs. Blake were discussing the matter, Alice, whom they had supposed to be out of the house, suddenly burst into gales of laughter on overhearing her parents' conversation and dashed outdoors. In less than an hour every girl in Oakdale knew of the unhappy Nick's plight, but fortunately by that time he was well on his way to a summer resort with his parents and would not return until school opened again.

Rejoining her friends on the porch a moment later, Alice, forgetting her suspicions of a minute ago, slipped behind the hammock on which Mabel and Anita were sitting and unceremoniously dumped them off.

"Scram, sluts," she commanded, "we're going over to Mrs. Evans'. She's calling a special meeting tonight. C'mon."

"Oh, oh!" groaned Mabel, "we're in for it now!"

"Who's in for what?" asked Alice.

"It's your fault, too, Alice Blake," replied Anita. "You and your half-baked ideas!"

"What are you driving at?" demanded the perplexed Alice although she suspected that the present anguish of the two girls was connected in some way with their reluctance (which on Mabel's part was unusual) to avail themselves of refreshments a short while ago.

"Oh, you wouldn't understand," sighed Mabel, "you're too dumb!"

"We might as well tell her, though," answered Anita, "before Dolores flosses it up for her."

"I guess you're right," agreed Mabel, and so as they walked the short distance to Mrs. Evans' house, Mabel and Anita, carefully avoiding the comic details of their blunder of the afternoon, told the amused Alice what had happened after she had left them at the grocery store.

"So that's why you were willing to sacrifice a soda before," giggled Alice. "You were scared we'd meet Dolores!"

"I wonder," began Anita pointedly in an effort to change the subject, "what the meeting is about?"

"Very likely," teased Alice, "Mabel is right and you two chumps are in for it. Dad had charge of the complaint department today and when your victim called up, he probably referred the matter to Mrs. Evans."

"Oh golly!" groaned Mabel, "I bet that's just what he did do!"

"You and your gangster stories!" sniffed Anita.

Although young and pretty, Mrs. Evans, the Guardian of Wa-Wan-Da Camp Fire of which the girls were members was as much a Camp Fire Girl as any of the twenty girls that comprised its Circle, she could also be a stern and strict disciplinarian when the occasion demanded and both Mabel and Anita knew that this was one of the occasions.

As they approached the house, they saw that they were the last to arrive. Although reconciled with her father-in-law, old Amos Jordan, eccentric millionaire and donor of Caliban Island, Mrs. Evans preferred living in the modest little home she and her husband had purchased out of their savings.

Mr. Jordan had disinherited Mr. Evans, whom he had adopted when he was a youth, but relented after he discovered that it was through his estranged daughter-in-law's efforts as leader of the Camp Fire Girls that his precious ruby was recovered after it had been mysteriously stolen.

The girls fairly overflowed the little house and as Alice, Mabel and Anita came up the steps to the porch, they had to literally force their way through the throng. The night was warm and as soon as Mrs. Evans discovered the arrival of the late comers, she called the girls to attention.

"We're all here now," she announced, "and since it's so warm and stuffy in the house, I propose we hold the meeting on the front lawn!"

Loud cheers of approval greeted the announcement and a moment later, using the light from

the porch to see by, the girls were grouped in a circle on the lawn, reclining on newspapers in order not to soil stockings and dresses with grass stains.

"I've called our meeting tonight instead of the usual time for a very special reason," began Mrs. Evans, and both Mabel and Anita stole covert glances at each other. It was coming and there was nothing they could do about it. They might as well take their medicine, they decided, and get it over with. Nerving themselves for the expose they faced their leader and waited to hear her denouncement of them. But no denouncement was forthcoming. Instead Mrs. Evans' next words left not only Mabel and Anita speechless with joyous surprise, but the rest of the girls in a like condition.

"As long as we have an island," she continued, "we might as well use it. There are two weeks before school begins and I thought it would be grand if we could spend them on Caliban Island. All in favor make the Hand Sign of Fire."

Instantly twenty hands rose swiftly and gracefully upward.

"Fine!" beamed the Guardian. "Get your parents' consent and be ready to leave in two days. Take equipment for two weeks of camping."

Mrs. Evans had hardly finished speaking when an excited babble of voices arose and it was only after some difficulty that Mrs. Evans succeeded in restoring silence again.

"We'll meet at Mr. Jordan's boat house," she

continued. "He has kindly consented to let us use his launch. Pop Wilkins will take us over and call for us again at the end of two weeks. In the meantime, we'll be alone on the island, absolutely cut off from everybody!"

Again the eager, excited buzz of conversation rose and again Mrs. Evans strove to enforce silence. Finally she succeeded.

"There's one more thing," she continued, with a twinkle in her merry blue eyes, "and that is if Mabel, Anita, Dolores, Alice and Lenore come with us, as I think they will, will they please do all their disappearing and burglar catching now so that we can give ourselves up to having a good time while on the island?"

It was through the efforts of the five girls while on a hike last summer that the notorious gem thieves who robbed Anita's father of a priceless ruby he had obtained for Mr. Jordan were caught. In appreciation the old millionaire had given the girls the island on which they now planned to spend the last two weeks of summer vacation.

"This is Thursday," went on Mrs. Evans after the laughter following her last remark died down. "I want all of you who are going, to be here tomorrow night around eight o'clock so we can discuss final arrangements. Does anybody want to ask any questions?"

But apparently nobody did or if there were any, they were forgotten in the hubbub of gleeful chatter that broke out again, but this time Mrs. Evans did not try to stem the tide but joined in,

her voice mixing in girlish excitement with the others.

Later that evening as the five girls were walking home, Dolores exposed Anita and Mabel to Alice and Lenore.

"Can you imagine these dumbbells," she snickered, "jumping a dignified old lawyer like Mr. Preston?"

"How do you know he was Mr. Preston?" demanded Alice.

"Why, he told me so," replied Dolores.

"Oh," answered Alice sarcastically, "he told you so! That's different. I met a man once who told me he was Santa Claus."

"Well," sniffed Dolores, "you can believe your silly old gangster story if you like and besides, is Mr. Preston the only dignified looking old stranger in Oakdale? Couldn't your Dad have pointed out someone else to you?"

"Maybe," answered Alice slowly, "but still, putting two and two together, it doesn't look so nice."

"What do you mean?" asked Lenore.

"Well," answered Alice, "Dad told me the Tucker place was rented by men he believes to be fugitives from Chicago and he pointed one of 'em out to me, a dignified looking old gent, and then Dolores shows another elderly man, possibly the same one, where the Tucker place is and beside, what would a man like Mr. Preston be doing in Oakdale?"

"And another thing, if the men that rented the place are gangsters, they couldn't get a man

like Mr. Preston as their attorney. They'd get some shyster lawyer instead."

"Right you are, m'dear 'Olmes," drawled Mabel, "right you are!"

"Deucedly clevah, ol' bean," continued Anita catching the spirit of Mabel's imitation of a well-known radio feature.

"Oh, you make me sick!" snapped Dolores. "You've been seeing too many movies. If that's the case, I suppose I'm in cahoots with the gang, if there is one, because I'm trying to make you believe that your gangster really is Mr. Preston!"

"Poor girl!" sighed Mabel, "the strain's been too much for her!"

"That's not it," corrected Anita. "She's got a crush on the old boy."

"No," put in Lenore, "she just wants him for his money!"

Dolores, however, paid no heed to her friends' bantering but at the same time she was convinced in her own mind that she was right in taking the elderly stranger at his word and believing that he was in truth George Preston, senior member of a nationally known law firm.

Twenty excited and highly elated girls in Oakdale got little or no sleep that night for thinking of the proposed two weeks on Caliban Island, for every one of the Camp Fire maidens had had practically no difficulty in persuading their respective parents to let them go on the jaunt.

Alice took advantage of her sleeplessness to wait up for her father. The matter of the dig-

nified-looking stranger puzzled her and she was anxious to know if the men who rented the deceased physician's home were actually gangsters, real or imagined, and if the elderly man was really George Preston, famous Chicago attorney.

Surprised at finding his daughter up so late, Sergeant Blake was about to order Alice off to bed when she gently pushed him into his favorite easy chair and, perching herself on the arm, told her story. For a few moments after Alice had finished, her father puffed at his pipe in silence while Alice watched the smoke curl up through the shade of the floor lamp next to the chair and vanish into the darkness.

"I don't know, Alice," he finally said. "Did you see the man Dolores was walking with?"

Alice shook her head.

"No," she replied. "Mabel and Anita saw him with Dolores after I left them at the grocery."

"Did they describe him?" continued her father.

"No," answered the girl, "except to say that he was an elderly man and dignified-looking like the man you pointed out to me."

"Do you know what time it was when the girls saw him?" questioned her father.

"Not exactly," replied Alice. "It was quarter after six when I left Mabel and Anita and they saw Dolores and the man when they came out of the store about five minutes later."

"Did Mabel and Anita tell the man why they

followed him and practically tried to take his life?" smiled the sergeant.

"No," answered Alice, "they told Dolores later but before that the man threatened to call the police."

"Well, whoever he was, he didn't" responded her father, "and now I think you had better run along to bed. It's late now and there's nothing we can do about it anyway. I don't know whether George Preston is in town or not, but you've given me something to work on until the descriptions I wired to Chicago for arrive. Thanks for the tip, Detective Blake."

"O.K., chief," laughed Alice as she ran upstairs. Now that she had placed the matter in her father's capable hands, she felt safer, more secure. As she undressed, she heard her father downstairs dialing a number on the telephone and she knew without listening that he was sending another wire to the metropolis to check up on the whereabouts of the noted attorney and that he would not go to sleep that night until he had received a reply of some sort. But somehow or other Alice felt that she did not need a telegram from the Chicago police to tell her that the man who had so charmed Dolores with his suavity of manner was not George Preston.

CHAPTER III

"C'mon crumb, get a wiggle on!"

Lenore stood at the foot of the stairs and called up to Anita for whom she was waiting to take to Mrs. Evans' house. It was the night designated by the Camp Fire leader as special meeting night to conclude final arrangements for the proposed trip to Caliban Island and Lenore was calling for Anita first before driving around to the homes of Alice, Mabel and Dolores.

"Keep your equilibrium, woman, keep your equilibrium," shouted Anita. "I'll be down in a minute!"

"You pulled that one a half hour ago," returned Lenore. "If you're not down here in exactly two minutes I'll come up and bring you down."

"You and what army?" demanded Anita appearing at the head of the stairs. "I've a good mind—"

"Liar!" interrupted Lenore. "C'mon, let's get going."

A moment later the shiny green roadster with Lenore at the wheel backed up a few hundred yards along Main Street, turned a corner and came to a halt in front of the Chapman residence. A long, strident blare from the horn brought Mabel to an upstairs window.

"Down in a minute!" she called and disappeared from view.

"Oh Heavens!" groaned Lenore. "Here goes another half hour!"

But Mabel was true to her word for exactly one minute later she was squeezing her bulk in next to Anita on the seat of the car. Alice was ready and waiting when Lenore brought her car to a halt before the Blake home, but when, a few minutes later, they stopped for Dolores, they found the house in darkness.

A bright moon was shining and by its light, Alice, who was sitting in the rumble seat, made out a bit of white paper pinned to the screen door.

"She's left a note for us," she announced, leaping from the car and while Lenore threw her spotlight on the porch, Alice detached the paper from its moorings and returned to the car.

"Of all the blame fools!" she cried as she quickly scanned the contents of the note. "Listen to this."

"Girls (she read), I am walking to Mrs. Evans' house with Mr. Preston. See you later.—Dolores."

"Well knock me down!" gasped Mabel.

"The idiot is going to get herself into a mess of trouble if she doesn't watch out!" exclaimed Anita.

"Maybe she's been kidnaped!" cried Lenore.

"Let's run over to Sloane Street and—"

"No," replied Alice thoughtfully, "she'll be at the meeting."

"What makes you think so?" demanded Anita. "Have you, of all people, fallen for that Preston gag too?"

"Of course not," snapped Alice. "I just have a hunch she'll be there and even if we did go over to the old Tucker place, what good would it do? We couldn't get in, they probably have guards around the place and we'd only get ourselves into hot water."

"Yes, I suppose you're right," agreed Lenore reluctantly, "but at the same time, we've got to do something!"

"Well," suggested Alice, "if she went to Mrs. Evans', she ought to be there by now. Let's go and if she isn't there when we arrive, I'll phone Dad and he'll raid the place."

"Good idea," complimented Anita. 'C'mon, climb in. Give 'er the gas. Let's go!"

Lenore lost no time in covering the distance of a half mile or less between the two houses. As she turned her car into the Evans' driveway eight eager eyes closely scanned the group of girls assembled on the lawn and porch in an effort to locate the missing Dolores, but in all that sea of faces the one sought for was not to be found, and four loyal hearts sank with the same sickening sensation. Wildly the girls tumbled from the car even before Lenore had brought it to a halt. All with the same object in mind, they raced for the house. Mrs. Evans would know if Dolores were there or not. It was possible that they had not seen their missing friend as they drove in. She might have been

someplace in the house just at that moment, if she were there at all. Dashing around the corner of the house from the driveway, barely acknowledging the greetings of the other girls, the four cut across the lawn and stopped stock still! There, not ten feet away from them and chatting merrily with some other girls, was Dolores! Lenore was the first to recover the use of her limbs and tongue. With one bound she reached the startled Dolores and let loose a stream of invective.

"You, dim witted dumbbell!" she began, "what's the idea scaring the teeth out of us?"

"I bet I lost a pound!" chimed in Mabel reproachfully.

"Give an account of yourself, woman!" demanded Anita sternly.

As the other girls looked on in mild amusement, no one noticed that only Alice did not add her exclamations to the others.

"Wait a minute!" laughed Dolores. "What am I on the pan for?"

"Well I like that!" exclaimed Mabel, "Trying to play the innocent little lamb when you know perfectly well what you did!"

"Quit stalling," demanded Lenore. "What's the idea of making a play for the Preston bird?"

"So that's it!" smiled Dolores. "Jealous?"

"Idiot!" snapped Anita. "You know what we mean!"

"Oh, for the love of Mike," replied Dolores testily, "act your age! Do you think I'm going to fall for a silly story like that? Mr. Preston

phoned this evening and asked me if I could see him. I told him I was coming here so he offered to walk me over. Apologized for not having a car. I think you girls are just burned up."

"You're blamed right, we're burned up," replied Mabel, "but not for the same reason you think we are."

Hearing the sound of angry voices above the general din, Mrs. Evans made her way to where the girls were standing to investigate the cause of the trouble. In her more than five years of guardianship of the Camp Fire Girls she had prided herself that there had never been any dissention among her charges and she was not going to let Discord rear its ugly head among the girls now.

"Are you having some difficulty?" she asked as she joined the group. "Perhaps I could help."

"Let's go in the house, Mrs. Evans," suggested Alice as she noticed that the other girls were beginning to gather around them. "We need your advice."

Seated in the comfortable living room while the other girls whispered among themselves outside piecing together scraps of overhead argument Mrs. Evans listened while Alice, who seemed to have been appointed spokesman by popular, although unspoken approval, told Mrs. Evans the whole story from beginning to end.

"H'm," mused the Guardian after Alice had finished. "I don't quite know what to make of all this. Dolores introduced Mr. Preston to me

and I thought him a very pleasant gentleman but your story, Alice, puts quite a different light on the matter. Dolores might be perfectly right in assuming the man to be all he claims for himself and then again, Alice might have the right idea. We have no way of telling or finding out. The best thing to do, I think, is to forget the matter for the present. We'll be on the island for the next two weeks and during that time, since Alice has already prudently spoken to her father, developments will most likely occur to clear up the whole thing. In the meantime, since we are leaving at seven o'clock tomorrow morning, I don't think Dolores will have another opportunity to alarm the rest of you, needlessly or otherwise. And now," she concluded, rising, "I think we had better go out and join the others. They'll think something dreadful has happened."

The girls accepted their leader's dictum without a word. Mrs. Evans had settled the matter and they were satisfied. As they followed her out to the porch, the telephone rang and Mrs. Evans called over her shoulder to Lenore.

"See who it is, will you, Lenore?" she asked. "I don't want to keep the girls waiting any longer. It's getting late and I want you all to go to bed early tonight so you can get up on time in the morning."

Standing on the porch while the girls gathered around on the lawn, Mrs. Evans was instructing the girls as to the time and place of the meeting preparatory to leaving for the island when Lenore,

white faced and shaking, came out of the house. Finishing her announcement, Mrs. Evans turned to Lenore to find out whom the phone call was from when she noticed her shaken appearance.

"Why what on earth is the matter with you?" she asked, surprised. "You look as pale as a ghost!"

"I-I," gasped Lenore, "I h--heard--oh, Mrs. Evans we--we're going to be--be k--killed!"

"We're going to be what?" demanded the astonished leader. "What are you talking about?"

A surprised buzz of conversation arose from the group of girls on the lawn as they heard Lenore's frightened statement and knowing something of crowd psychology, Mrs. Evans turned to the waiting girls and, placing an arm around Lenore's waist, dismissed them.

"Lenore isn't feeling well," she announced, "and I'm going to drive her home. In the meantime, I think you had all better go home now yourselves and get some sleep. Remember, we meet at seven o'clock tomorrow morning."

As the girls left, only Mabel, Dolores, Alice and Anita remaining behind, Mrs. Evans again turned her attentions to the alarmed Lenore.

"Now take your time," she began soothingly, "and tell me what happened."

Sinking weakly into a chair and sipping the glass of water Mabel had brought her, Lenore looked at the others with large, frightened eyes.

"I don't think we had better go to the island, Mrs. Evans," she spoke shakily.

"Why not?" asked the leader.

"That telephone call just now," replied the girl with a shudder. "I never heard such an awful voice in my life!"

"Rest awhile, dear," counseled Mrs. Evans softly stroking Lenore's hand while the others looked on silently.

"I feel better now," replied Lenore. "That phone call," she went on, "was from Ridgeville. A man asked for you, Mrs. Evans and when I told him you were busy and asked if I could take the message, he spoke to someone else and then told me to tell you to keep us away from Caliban Island. He said if we went, we'd be 'bumped off,' killed!"

"Why the idea!" exclaimed Mrs. Evans indignantly. "I never heard of such utter nonsense! We certainly have every intention of going! I wish I had spoken to him, whoever he is!"

"I wish you had, too, replied Lenore wistfully.

Suddenly Mabel began to giggle and although she tried to suppress her mirth, it got the best of her and in spite of herself, she laughed aloud.

"I fail to see the humor in the situation," reproved Mrs. Evans. "You're acting like a silly baby."

"No I'm not," chuckled Mabel, Lenore is. Don't you know who lives in Ridgeville?"

Suddenly Anita snapped her fingers.

"Of course!" she exclaimed. "Marshall Davis!"

At the mention of that name a sigh of relief escaped Mrs. Evans' lips and she collapsed weakly into a chair.

"Well," she exclaimed, "that's different. I'm

surprised you didn't recognize his voice, Lenore,"

"He probably held a handkerchief or something over the mouthpiece," replied the girl, once more at her ease, "but just wait until I see him! I'll scare him pink, green, blue and purple."

Dolores couldn't resist the temptation to make the sly remark that had been at the tip of her tongue ever since Anita mentioned the name of the young man who lived in the next town but who made frequent visits to Oakdale and who had been the cause of Lenore's recent fright.

"He probably has heard about Detectives Chapman and Brooks and their most recent case," she snickered. "Besides, ever since he saw that gangster picture last week, he's been going around threatening to 'bump people off' or 'take 'em for a ride' or something pleasant like that."

Marshall Davis was as familiar a figure in Oakdale as he was in his home town of Ridgeville. He came and went as he pleased and although it was generally known that he was not any too bright, he was considered harmless. His chief fault lay in his impressionability. Motion pictures in particular had a strong effect on him and for weeks after he had seen a picture, he would go about imitating whatever character had appealed to him most. This, together with a tendency to play practical jokes, made him a conspicuous figure in both towns.

Little wonder, then, that Mabel had no difficulty in explaining the mysterious telephone call and it was well within the limits of reason for the others to accept her explanation and

enlarge on it, for was not Marshall Davis the practical joker of two towns?

As the girls left Mrs. Evans' house a short while later, laughing and joking over their recent scare and promising each other dire vengeance on the town moron, Alice broke the silence she had maintained ever since Lenore made her terrifying announcement but a short while ago.

"How do you know it really was Davis?" she asked, seriously.

CHAPTER IV.

Alice's question could not have had a greater effect if a bombshell had exploded at the same time. With one accord the girls stopped and turned toward her.

"What are you driving at?" demanded Lenore, a quiver in her voice. "Who else do you think it could have been?"

Alice saw there was no use in re-awakening Lenore's fears and needlessly frightened the others, so she merely shrugged her shoulders.

"Nothing," she replied. "Forget it. Come on, lets get going. We've got to get up early tomorrow."

"Alice Blake," began Mabel severely, "what have you got up your sleeve besides your arm?"

"My handkerchief," laughed Alice.

Nor could the continued pleas, threats and teasings of the girls elicit further information from Alice but before she went to bed that night, her father was in possession of all the details of the mysterious phone call from Ridgeville.

"I know it wasn't Marshall Davis," she concluded as her father nodded in agreement, "because I heard Mrs. Wolf next door tell Mom this morning that he was going to drive her to Ingleton this afternoon and if he did, he couldn't

have possibly gotten back to Ridgeville in time to make that call."

"He's in Ingleton, all right," answered her father. "Pete Collins phoned from there this evening and among other things told me that he'd seen Davis there. We keep an eye on him, you know. Can't tell when he might do something."

Alice nodded.

"Did you hear from Chicago about Mr. Preston?" she asked.

"I did," answered her father, "and he is not there. Information from his office points to a sudden business trip to another state."

"Then do you think Dolores' friend is really Mr. Preston?" inquired Alice, surprised.

"Not if he's the man I pointed out to you," answered the sergeant. "I'd know George Preston if I saw him and that other chap is a known criminal."

"Then perhaps," began Alice timidly, "we'd better not go to Caliban Island?"

"I was just coming to that," replied her father. "I want you to go. If you didn't, that would be playing into the hands of this gang, whoever they are, and we wouldn't be able to apprehend them. There's some scheme they've got hatching and that island of yours seems to be a mighty important factor in it. We can't arrest those chaps that've taken the Tucker place despite the fact we know they're gangsters, until we have something to arrest 'em for. That's where you and the rest of the Camp Fire girls come in."

Go to the island and keep your eyes and ears open. I'll have a man watching you from the town hall tower day and night. If anything happens by day, he'll see it and if something comes up at night, throw these crystals into your camp fire, it'll make it turn green. That's our signal."

As Alice took the package of boric acid crystals her father handed her, she wondered if it was fair to the other girls, especially Mabel, Dolores, Anita and Lenore, her most intimate friends, to lead them without warning, into so perilous a situation as the stay on Caliban Island promised to be. She was about to speak her mind when her father held up his hand.

"I know what you're going to say, child," he smiled. "Tell the girls by all means. Not only is it fair, but I'll have a force of twenty capable detectives instead of only one."

Seven o'clock the next morning saw twenty happy, eager girls crowding the old boat house on Amos Jordan's large estate just on the outskirts of Oakdale. Arrangements had been made with those girls whose families had cars to pick up and drive the others to the meeting place and Mr. Jordan, in addition to placing his large power launch at the girls' disposal, had instructed his chauffeur to drive the remaining girls over.

The launch was large enough to comfortably accommodate everyone but it was decided to make two trips to the island, transporting the girls first and then returning with the camp equipment and supplies in order not to run the risk

of having the overburdened boat capsize midway across.

Finally all was in readiness and as the girls timidly stepped from the landing stage into the boat, one by one, the air was filled with excited squeals as the boat rocked from side to side with each new passenger.

"Don't let Mabel in!" someone called, "she'll sink the boat!"

"She could get a good job from the fishermen," called another. "They'd pay her to go swimming every so often so the tide would rise."

But Mabel was used to such jibes from her companions and paid them little or no heed. She had her methods of retaliation and, as was her custom, would bide her time until her victims would least expect an attack. Then woe be unto her who had held her size up to ridicule!

As the girls took their places in the boat, Pop Wilkins, general handy man around the estate, looked around from his position at the helm and, peering over the top of his spectacles, counted his charges, jabbing a long, bony finger at each girl in turn.

"Twenny one o'ye, includin' Miz Evans," he announced. "Right?"

"That's right, Pop," smiled Mrs. Evans, "and we're all ready!"

"Wal, I reckon we'll be goin', then," he replied turning back to the wheel. "Cast off, thar!" he called to the waiting men on the landing stage and as they obeyed his command, he started the engines and with a roar and a quiver, the launch

shot from the landing stage out into the open lake.

"We're off!" cried all the girls at once and immediately began singing one of the popular songs of the day to which they fitted their own words. As the launch sped over the water, the girls sang song after song, their favorites being hits from current musical comedies.

Although the day was warm, the fresh, cool breezes of the lake soon made them wish they had brought at least their sweaters along. Noticing their discomfort, Pop Wilkins picked up a megaphone suspended from the roof of the craft and, keeping his hand on the wheel, turned his head and bawled welcome news to the girls.

"Ye'll find straps hangin' from th' sides o' th' boat," he shouted above the roar of the wind. "Pull 'em and shet th' winders ef ye want ter!"

"So that's what they're for!" cried Anita tugging at the strap nearest her. "I thought they were to hang onto in case the boat turned over or something!"

In a few minutes all the windows along both sides of the launch were closed and as the exhaust from the engines warmed the interior of the boat, the girls once more burst into song. Suddenly Pop Wilkins reached over and tapped Mrs. Evans, who was sitting near him, on the shoulder and pointed ahead.

"Thar she is," he announced, "ol' Caliban Island. Aint bin a soul on 'er fer nigh onto thutty years."

The girls saw the island almost at the same time their helmsman did and as they all craned their necks to catch a glimpse of the place on which they were to spend the next two weeks and conjectured among themselves as to what the island would be like, especially since it had been uninhabited, as they heard old Wilkins say, for almost thirty years, he swung the boat sharply around.

"Gotta hunt me a landin' place," he announced. "They usta be one but I reckon it's fell apart by now."

"No it isn't, Pop," suddenly called Mrs. Evans whose clear young eyes were sharper than Wilkins' old ones, "there's the landing place over there!"

"By cracky, so t'is!" exclaimed the old man. "Jest goes t'show ye they knew how t' build things so's t' make 'em last when I wuz a young un!"

Carefully the skipper of the little craft warped his vessel alongside the landing stage that, despite some thirty years of alleged disuse, was still serviceable and in fairly good repair. But no one noticed this obvious fact. The girls were too excited at having reached their destination to heed or know anything save the fact that they were beginning what promised to be two fleeting, glorious weeks of pure fun.

Caliban Island is situated about midway across Lake Coro, a sizeable inland lake, one slender arm of which touches Oakdale as it swings away to lave the feet of a score or more of small towns

that dot its shores. According to information to be found in back copies of the National Geodetic Society's reports, Lake Coro was formerly dotted with many small islands similar to Caliban but gradually they had all disappeared beneath the lake's surface until only Caliban was left. For some reason or other, it alone had resisted Nature's forces and as the girls eagerly scanned the place as they alighted from the boat, they were glad that Caliban had been spared for no more delightful spot, scenically, had ever gladdened the eyes and hearts of nature-loving girls.

The island was about a mile long and about a half mile wide, narrowing down to a pointed tip at the end facing Oakdale and rising to a wide, blank cliff wall facing the opposite shore. Abundant and luxurious foliage grew everywhere and it did not strain the imaginations of the girls too much to feel that they were on some tropical isle, entirely cut off from the rest of the world.

From the narrow end almost to the center of the island, the ground, although overgrown with tall grass and bushes, was a gently sloping expanse rising upward to the opposite side. There large rocks and boulders were piled in wild and fantastic array as though some giant hand had carelessly tossed them there. Here and there a tree, forcing its way up through the rocks had twined its roots about them so that it appeared as though some huge, brawny arm were reaching down from the heavens to snatch a handful of boulders in its long, gnarled fingers.

As the boat discharged its load of screaming, excited girls, a flock of wild birds rose with a whirl from the center of the island and flew away after first circling the island, loudly scolding their intruders.

Eager to be off on a tour of exploration, the girls could hardly stand still while Mrs. Evans called the roll to make sure that all were present.

"I know you're all anxious to see what this place looks like," announced their leader as she finished roll call, "and so am I but we must proceed with caution. Remember, this island hasn't been occupied for thirty years and we don't know what's on it."

"This is a swell place!" exclaimed Mabel looking around. "I wonder why Mr. Jordan never used it?"

"Because he never really wanted it," smiled Mrs. Evans. "He bought it many years ago as a matter of speculation but if we're going to explore, let's get started. We can't keep Pop waiting here all day. We'll all go together and see what we can see. Come on!"

It was useless to try to keep the girls in any orderly formation. With a wild whoop they rushed from the landing stage where they had been standing and, despite their leader's instructions to keep together, they were soon scattered all over the island, climbing rocks, pushing through the dense undergrowth and appearing and disappearing in the tall grass with which the place was overgrown. Mrs. Evans too, joined in the fun and when, at the end of an hour, she

blew her whistle summoning everybody back to the landing stage, she was just as hot and flushed as any one of her charges.

"All right, Pop," she announced. "We're going to stay. The place seems to be ideal. How soon can you be back with our stuff?"

Lazily the old man got up and knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"Bout a half hour, I reckon," he replied. "Kinda tho't ye'd like it here."

While waiting for the return of the old man the girls prepared their camp site. This was strenuous labor and when Mabel suggested a swim in the nude, Alice was forced to unfold her father's plan about the man posted in the tower of the city hall, and his reasons for believing that the island was being used by a gang of racketeers. As the girls discussed this, Pop returned and willing hands soon had the boat unloaded. Pop volunteered that he thought they oughter hev a man aroun', but Mrs. Evans saw through the old man's offer and knew he merely wanted to get away from his nagging offspring. She declined with thanks even though Pop Wilkins looked sadly disappointed at the easy vacation slipping through his fingers. After he left the girls put up their tents, got into their suits and after a half hour of swimming twenty ravenously hungry girls were eating an enormous dinner cooked over open fires. Utterly worn out with the work and excitement the girls stretched out in the shade and fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER V

If it hadn't been for a frightened rabbit scurrying away from a leaf blown across its path, there is no telling how long Mrs. Evans and the girls might have slept but in its frantic efforts to escape, the rabbit, leaping for shelter, landed for the merest fraction of a second on Mabel's back and was gone. But for Mabel, that fraction of a second was enough. With a wild yell, she awoke, rousing the others to sudden wakefulness. With a startled glance Mrs. Evans consulted her wristwatch and shook her head vigorously to make sure her eyes weren't deceiving her or that she was still asleep, a fact she found hard to believe. When she had closed her eyes, it had been one thirty and to the startled leader that seemed only five or ten minutes ago but which according to her watch, was more than an hour and a half ago!

The girls were all yawning and stretching and rubbing their eyes and blinking against the bright glare of the sun.

Dolores, who was slightly taller than the other girls had chosen a spot a little apart from the others so that she could have plenty of room in which to stretch out. Rising now, she joined the others where she dropped down on the grass next to Anita and Lenore. Alice and Mabel

were nearby picking the grass and leaves out of each others hair.

"Whew!" she exclaimed, "did I have a pip of a dream!"

"You should talk!" grunted Mabel. "I'll feel those clutching fingers on my back for years!"

"I still feel a little dizzy," confessed Dolores. "I dreamed I was rising and falling, rising and falling while a million airplanes flew through my head. I can still hear 'em.

"I dreamed I heard some kind of noise too," replied Lenore.

"I heard something too," confessed Anita.

"Probably the ants stamping around," yawned Mabel.

"Or the grass growing," put in Alice.

Rising, Mrs. Evans looked off toward the east where a few dark clouds were barely discernable on the horizon.

"What you heard," she theorized, "or thought you heard, was probably thunder. Those clouds over there look as though they might be unwelcome visitors by tonight. I think it would be a good idea if we put up a large lean-to in case it does rain. We'll need one anyway to store our supplies in. Get your axes and mat-tocks, girls."

After much discussion as to the best place to construct the lean-to, a site opposite the half circle of tents was chosen and the work began with the face or open side of the shelter facing the tents. With the work equally divided among the girls and their leader going from group to

group lending a helping hand, it was not long before the large, two walled, open faced shelter with its long roof sloping down to the ground allowing the rain water to drain off, was finished. After a critical inspection of the job, Mrs. Evans gave her approval of a task well performed.

"We'll rest a bit," she announced, "and then move the supplies in while we can take our time about it instead of waiting until it begins to rain and getting ourselves soaked."

A few minutes later the girls again were busily at work carrying in their supplies and stacking them neatly in the back of the lean-to. Refrigerator holes were also dug inside the shelter for perishable foodstuffs and the large water jars they had brought along with them. Not wishing to take unnecessary chances with the lake water, bucketsful had been thoroughly boiled for more than twenty minutes, thus positively killing whatever germs might have been present. The boiled water was then poured into the large earthenware jars brought along for the purpose, allowed to cool and then placed in the several refrigerator holes. An aluminum dipper was hung from a stake driven into the ground near each water hole but the girls were expressly forbidden to drink from them. They were to serve as ladles and nothing more, since each girl carried her own collapsible aluminum drinking cup.

Finally everything was in readiness and as the girls rested from their labors Mrs. Evans outlined a plan for the performance of the regular

camp duties in which each girl was to have her share.

"I'm going to divide you up into crews of three girls each," she announced, "so that, including myself, we'll have seven crews, each with its own particular job and each functioning independently of the others except at such times when co-operation is necessary. The duties of the crews will be interchangeable and transfers from one crew to another will be given when asked for provided the reason is adequate."

Producing a list from her pocket, Mrs. Evans read off the names, assigning duties as she did so, thus one crew was to do the camp cooking for a period of three days, another was to wash and dry dishes for a similar period and so on until all the necessary camp duties had been distributed among the girls. No crew was to continue in its original capacity for more than three days, thus making for variety.

"This goes into effect at once," announced the Guardian returning the list to her pocket, "so I think the commissary department and the cooks ought to get together and decide what we're to have for supper and give it to us. The Fire Makers will prepare whatever cooking fires are necessary."

Again the camp was a scene of busy industry as the various crews set about their tasks. Fires were made, water was brought and the hundred and one necessary duties were performed with an efficiency and dispatch that would have done credit to a well trained army. Soon the tantaliz-

ing odors of cooking permeated the whole island. A casual observer might have commented on the waste of food had he been permitted to inspect the preparations for supper but after that meal was over, there was barely a handful of scraps to indicate that anything had been eaten at all. Fresh air, healthy exercise, good spirits and work are the best appetite builders in the world and no more concrete proof of that statement could be asked for than the havoc the Camp Fire Girls wreaked among the plain but nourishing and abundant comestibles of that evening's meal.

After supper was over and the various crews had performed their tasks, a Ceremonial Fire was lighted and the girls gathered around for the rites that were especially designed to make Caliban Island a part of Wa-Wan-Da Camp. The official opening song of the Camp Fire was sung after which the Dedication and Acceptance ceremonies were begun. The girls were midway in their proceedings when Lenore, who had just risen and was about to take a burning stick from the fire as part of the ceremony, stood still, her eyes wide with fear. Noticing what appeared to be her sudden dilemma, Mabel snickered.

"She's forgotten the rite," she whispered to Anita who was sitting next to her but a moment later it was Mabel's turn to look alarmed. The others too, now felt what Lenore had been the first to perceive. For a second no one moved and then again came that which caused their concern. The whole island seemed to be in the throes of a violent convulsion. Deep rumblings

followed by intense vibrations shook the earth beneath them and the fire, which had been built of logs criss-crossed log cabin fashion, collapsed. For the space of perhaps two minutes the rumblings and vibrations continued while the girls sat motionless, not knowing what was going to happen next. They did not know that the same phenomenon had occurred that afternoon while they were asleep and they were at a loss to explain it. Suddenly the noise and shaking stopped, almost as abruptly as it had started and as peace and quiet once more settled over the island an excited buzz of hazarded guesses ran around the Camp Fire Circle as the girls tried to explain the strange occurrence. One girl, Dorothy Powers, who had spent a few months in California a year or two ago offered what seemed to be the most plausible solution.

"That was an earthquake," she announced definitely, "I know because that's just the way the one that happened in California when I was there started. The ground shook and there were rumbling noises just like the ones we just heard."

But the practical minded Alice was not so easily satisfied and almost before Dorothy finished her explanation she shook her head in disapproval.

"Earthquakes don't happen this far east," she replied, "and even if it was an earthquake, which is almost impossible, the lake would have been agitated too. There would have been big waves that would have attracted our attention."

"That's right," agreed Mrs. Evans. I don't know what it was, but I'm sure it was no earth-

quake. However, we will go on with the ceremonies and explore the island more thoroughly in the morning to see if we can find out what was the cause of those noises and vibrations. There is nothing we can do now about it except to appoint sentries for the night. Each girl will watch for one hour and then wake her tent-mate who, after her hour is up, will wake a girl in the tent next to hers. "I'll take the first watch and then wake Dolores who sleeps in the first tent. Now, Lenore, go on from where you stopped."

But as Lenore continued with the interrupted ceremony, scant attention was paid her. The girl's minds were too filled with their recent experience to think anything but what had just occurred. Noticing their nervousness and wishing to restore the former good morale of the group, Mrs. Evans cut the ceremony short and instead of the usual Camp Fire procedure, she called upon the girls to sing the popular songs of the day and to tell jokes, a process that was slow in getting started but which, under the vivacious leadership of Mrs. Evans soon was making the island ring from end to end. An hour or more of singing and story telling soon restored the girls' spirits and by the time their leader announced bed time all thought of the mysterious actions of the island were forgotten.

The fire was replenished and a supply of sticks and logs to last the night placed nearby so that each sentry as she came on duty, could keep the fire burning brightly throughout the night.

As the girls sought their tents and last good-

nights were said, Mrs. Evans prepared to keep her lonely vigil. Sitting before the fire until the last girl had gone into her tent, she waited until she was sure that all the girls were asleep and then, getting to her feet, she softly made her way to her own tent, which she shared with one of the girls and, pulling back the flap, entered. A moment later she reappeared, buckling something about her slim waist and thrusting a flashlight into a pocket of her khaki breeches. Although the girls never knew it, their leader never went on a hike or camping trip without the small but efficient automatic pistol that now hung in its holster at her side. Again making sure that all her charges were fast asleep, the intrepid little Guardian slipped quietly between two of the tents and a moment later was swallowed up in the blackness of the night.

Two hours later she emerged from a point opposite the one that saw her departure and as she stepped into the dying firelight, a grim smile played about her lips. Replenishing the fire, she knew it would not be necessary to wake Dolores to start sentry duty. As the fire leaped up, its light showed streaks of dirt and soot all over the daring Guardian's hands and face and as she inspected her countenance in her pocket mirror by the light of the fire, she smiled to herself.

It was the work of a moment to exchange the pistol and flashlight for a cake of soap and a towel and as Mrs. Evans slipped down to the water's edge for her much needed ablutions, a

plan of action was beginning to form in her ever busy and alert mind for she had seen enough to very satisfactorily explain the rumbling noises and mysterious vibrations which had shaken the island earlier in the evening.

Lying face down high on a rocky ledge deep within a cavern near the rocky end of the island, her eye diligently applied to a fissure in the rock, Florence Evans, leader of Wa-Wan-Da Camp Fire of Oakdale had seen and heard that which certain State and Federal authorities would have given much to know.

CHAPTER VI

As Mrs. Evans slipped between the two tents and disappeared into the blackness of the night, she hadn't the vaguest idea of where she was going or what she expected to find. All she knew was that those noises and vibrations that had so alarmed the girls were caused, primarily, by some human agency and she was determined to find out who those humans were.

Feeling her way carefully along and using her flashlight sparingly for fear of attracting unwanted attention, Mrs. Evans made her way across the middle of the island to the opposite shore. So far she had seen nor heard nothing to arouse her suspicions or give any indication that someplace on Caliban Island a hidden menace lurked. For a moment she stood undecided which way to turn while in her mind she called up a map-like picture of the island.

"If I go that way," she whispered to herself jerking her head in the direction of the low, flat end of the island, "I'll probably just be wasting my time because I don't think that those noises—h'm! The rocks! That's it!"

Her mind once made up, the fearless Guardian lost no time in making her way to the rocky end of the island where she believed she would find some explanation of the mysterious rumblings.

It was quite possible, she told herself, that the noises could have been caused by air rushing into hollow rock formations at the water's edge as the tide receded and that the vibrations were merely due to the force of the intruding air. So sure was she that her theory was correct that she was half tempted to return to camp and investigate with the girls in the morning. She kept on, however, feeling that as long as she had come so far, she might as well go through with it. Picking her way carefully along, she presently came to the steep rocky slope that formed the back of the cliff facing the lake. Heretofore, Mrs. Evans had been progressing by the light of the moon but now, as she scrambled up the incline, she found the going more difficult and the moonlight too feeble to insure safe progress. Bringing her flashlight into play, she was surprised to find herself almost at the mouth of a cave that led into the side of the cliff.

"Just as I thought," she smiled to herself. "That cave probably runs through the cliff and comes out on the other side under the water and when the tide goes out, the air rushes up and comes out with a rumbling noise here. A force like that would cause the island to vibrate."

Thinking she had thus solved what appeared to be a baffling mystery in a very simple fashion, Mrs. Evans snapped off her light and was about to retrace her steps back to camp when her ear caught the sound of men's voices. As she stopped in alarm, she heard, in the mumbled jumble of sound, the word 'girls' repeated frequently. At

once there flashed into her mind the telephone call from Ridgeville, supposedly made by the town practical joker. Could it be possible that the weak minded youth and some of his cronies had obtained a boat and either preceded or followed the girls to the island? Or was there more to Alice's theory about Mr. Preston and the men who rented the old Tucker place than appeared on the surface?

For a moment Mrs. Evans hesitated and then, with a grim determination she swung about and plunged into the inky maw of the cavern, her flashlight in one hand and her pistol held in readiness in the other. Carefully feeling her way along and letting herself be guided by the sound of the voices that were becoming more and more audible as she went along, she suddenly perceived a thin slit of light gleaming overhead and the next moment she came face to face with a blank wall. The voices were nearer now and in addition to them Mrs. Evans could hear a low purring sound as though some expensive automobile engine were running nearby. The voices were very clear now but the purring sound was just loud enough to prevent the listener to overhear what was being said. Shielding her flashlight with her hand to minimize the danger of being seen, Mrs. Evans cast about for some means of getting up to the narrow splinter of light above her when her eye fell on a rocky ledge running along the wall of the cavern half way between the floor and ceiling. The lowest portion of the ledge was about five feet from the floor and Mrs.

Evans lacked some two or three inches of that height but reaching up on tip toe, she managed to grasp the edge of the rock and slowly but surely pull herself up. Creeping along the narrow ledge, her eyes still fixed on the thin streak of light above her, she came to a point directly below it. Slowly rising to her feet, she ran her hands over the rough wall before her, seeking some foot-hold that would enable her to climb up. At length her groping fingers came in contact with something firm and solid projecting from the wall and as she grasped it and slowly but firmly tested its strength, she prayed that it would hold her weight. Taking a firm hold, she swung herself up, catching hold with her legs as she did so. Astride the projection now, she slowly inched forward toward the chink of light that was now directly in front and a few inches below her. While still a few feet away from the light, Mrs. Evans stretched her length out along the narrow ledge of rock and by wriggling her body managed to maneuver herself into a position enabling her to apply her eye to the fissure in the rock from which the light was streaming.

What she saw almost made her heart stand still. Seated around a table in a room hewn out of the solid rock were four men. One was facing her, two presented their profiles and the fourth was seated with his back toward her but the owner of that back did not have to turn around in order for Mrs. Evans to recognize him. She had seen the man Dolores had introduced as George Preston

only once but that once was enough to indelibly impress every feature, every characteristic in her memory.

The purring noise still continued, filling the whole chamber but by reading the mens' lips to make up what was lost to her hearing, the daring Camp Fire leader was able to piece together their conversation which now seemed to concern a certain task assigned to one of their number. A sort of crude door was fixed into the wall at one end of the room and as Mrs. Evans watched, it swung open admitting a greater volume of noise and a sleek looking, dark young man. Beyond the doorway, since the newcomer did not bother to close it, Mrs. Evans beheld countless tiny blue sparks leaping and dancing about in the darkness and the smell of electrically charged air or ozone assailed her nostrils. Then, for the first time she noticed something that ordinarily was so commonplace it was taken for granted and yet, in this underground cavern, was utterly incongruous. The room was lighted by electricity! The same instant that she noted this fact, the reason for the blue sparks and the odor of ozone became apparent. Solved were the mysterious rumblings and vibrations! The room beyond the one into which she was looking contained electric dynamos!

"I fixed it, boss," the sleek looking young man was saying, "we'll get th' low down in th' morning."

"O. K." replied one of the men at the table. "Tip us off as soon as you hear anything."

As Mrs. Evans was trying to find a reason for this underground hideout with its high powered dynamos and distributing units, one of the men unwittingly told her. Addressing the man she thought was George Preston, he gave her a substantial clue from which she was able to reconstruct much of what had happened and what was going on.

"About dat Westville hookup," he began, "we gotta break de contract dey got wit' de state if we wanna get in dere unless y'wanna run de lines up nort' t'roo Kingston an' den back down t' Greenside."

"Is that all that's worrying you, Mike?" laughed the other. "Forget it. Those state contracts that Southwestern holds with these small towns are too easily broken to even think about. Put your lines in and by the time you're ready to shoot the juice, that contract will be just another scrap of paper."

"O. K." replied Mike, "now what are we gonna do about them goils?"

"Oh," smiled the pseudo Preston, "we'll just throw a good scare into 'em and watch 'em light out for home."

"In what?" sneered one of the other men, "or are you going to let 'em use our submarine?"

"Sure!" jeered the fourth member of the group, "Let 'em go an' bring de bulls back. Dey prob'ly know plenty by now."

"By Jove!" exclaimed the man who appeared to be the leader, "I hadn't thought of that. Even

if they know nothing now, they are sure to find out sometime."

"Yeah, an' if we keep 'em here we'll have de whole state on our necks when its time fer 'em t' go home an' dey don't show up," growled Mike.

"What about bumpin' 'em off like we said?" demanded one of the men as Mrs. Evans shuddered at the thought.

"I'll think it over," replied the leader. "We've got other things to do tonight. Get the sub ready, we're going over to Burton and convince the mayor that our light and power is better than Southwestern's."

As the men switched out the light and left the room, Mrs. Evans lay motionless on her rocky shelf thinking over what she had just seen and heard. Uppermost in her mind was the safety of the twenty sleeping girls she had left in camp but as she reflected on the events just transpired, she knew that her charges were safe for the time being. How long that safety would last, she did not know but her heart leaped with joy and inwardly she praised Alice's foresight in taking her father into her confidence as she remembered the policeman on watch night and day in the city hall tower back in Oakdale. If anything should happen that for some reason or other would escape the watcher's notice, she knew she could signal to the mainland for Alice had given her half of the package of boric acid crystals that would turn a fire a bright green when thrown upon it.

Carefully she sat up and backed along the rocky

projection. Using her flashlight freely now since she knew the men were gone, she swung down to the ledge and dropped nimbly to the ground. Still puzzled over the presence of the dynamos whose whirring she could still hear, Mrs. Evans reached the mouth of the cave when suddenly she was struck by a thought that cleared up most of the mystery. The towns the men mentioned in their conversation all bordered on the lake with the exception of Kingston which lay some miles to the north. The name, Southwestern, that had figured so prominently in their talk was the state power company that supplied electric light and power to those towns and hundreds of others. In a flash, she saw the whole scheme. The men she had just seen were stealing power from someplace, running it by submarine cable under the lake to the island and were redistributing and selling it to the small towns which they visited by submarine!

But where did they get the power from? As she made her way back to camp, this question puzzled Mrs. Evans until she remembered the street car situation in Oakdale. All too well she knew how the cars would suddenly be deprived of their power and coast to a standstill along the streets until the electric energy returned. Since Oakdale owned its own plant, harnessing a natural waterfall nearby for the driving power, no definite action had ever been taken to investigate the frequent failure of power. The street cars were a losing proposition anyway since Oakdale was not large enough for a street

car system to be of any real value. It was merely maintained because the Chamber of Commerce could use it to advantage in their advertising of the town. Strangely enough, the electric lights illuminating the streets and homes of Oakdale seldom if ever failed and as Mrs. Evans emerged into the feeble glow of the dying camp fire, she thought she had the solution to that problem.

It was evident that the power was being stolen from the Oakdale plant, a secret, underground cable running from there to the island and when a switch was thrown, the power that was being fed into the street car lines was then diverted to the island where it was 'stepped up' or increased by the dynamos, stored in distributing units and sent to the customer towns. Each time the supply of power on the island showed signs of running low, the men simply helped themselves to more from the Oakdale plant and since their cable happened to be hooked up to the one supplying power to the street cars, it was only that service that failed and not the electric light supply.

While Mrs. Evans was away from the camp on her trip of exploration, Alice had awakened and, thinking it her turn to stand sentry duty, had risen and dressed. As she softly slipped out of the tent, she heard a slight scraping noise that seemed to come from behind the camp. For a moment she stood and listened. This time she heard it a little louder and clearer than before. Unable to explain it to herself satisfactorily, she carefully proceeded in the direction from which

it seemed to come. Suddenly she stopped. The noise was very clear now and appeared to be right under her feet. Swiftly stooping down, Alice caught her breath as she saw the curved end of a stovepipe slowly push its way upward between two rocks!

Scarcely daring to breathe, she watched and listened as the bit of tin pipe concealed itself between the rocks. Suddenly she heard a voice that seemed to come from the bowels of the earth. Straining every nerve to catch what was being said, Alice's eyes grew round with alarm as she realized the purpose of the pipe.

"Now you stay here, Lefty, understand?" came the voice, "an as soon as y' get th' low down as t' whether dem skoits is wise 'er not, y' give us de tip off, see?"

"O. K." came the rejoinder. "Is dat all?"

"Dat's all," was the reply.

Alice had heard enough to tell her that they were in real danger and as she softly retraced her steps to camp, she debated with herself the advisability of waking Mrs. Evans, whom she supposed to be sleeping, now, or to wait until morning. Turning the problem over in her mind, she suddenly stopped still and listened. Clearly she heard the sound of water running as though someone were agitating the surface of the lake. As she listened for a repetition of the sound, she heard someone approach and when a second later Mrs. Evans emerged into the firelight, Alice heaved a sigh of relief. Placing a finger to her lips, the girl signalled for silence

and beckoned her leader to follow her. Leading the way to the lean-to Alice, in low whispers, told Mrs. Evans of the stovepipe between the rocks.

"I expected something like that!" frowned Mrs. Evans. "However, we can stuff it up in the morning. Don't say anything to the others about it until I do, Alice, because that would give us away. Go to bed now. We won't have to stand sentry any more tonight and we'll have a meeting the first thing in the morning."

As the two tip-toed back to their tents they did not know that despite their caution and whispering, every word they said had been overheard by the man at the underground listening post for, concealed inside the pipe was a small microphone and amplifier that caught every sound within a radius of several hundred yards. Earphones over his head, the man heard and remembered every word that passed between the girl and her leader,

CHAPTER VII

Back in Oakdale Pop Wilkins tilted his chair back against the boat-house and puffed reflectively at his pipe. The slower the smoke poured from between his parted lips, the harder he was thinking and the harder he thought, the sleepier he became until presently, worn out with the exertion of formulating an idea, his head drooped forward on his chest, his pipe slipped from between his teeth and Pop Wilkins slept, his newborn idea safe within the recesses of his brain.

Refreshed by his nap, the old man was wandering aimlessly along Main street in Oakdale, stopping here and there to chat with some acquaintance when suddenly he spied a familiar figure on the opposite side of the street. Crossing over with a spryness that was surprising for one of his years, Pop Wilkins stopped the young man.

"Ye're jes' th' feller I bin lookin' fer, Bob," he announced. "I got 'er propy-sitchin' I'd like t' talk over with ye."

"Alright, Pop," smiled the youth, "what is it?"

"How many fellers as kin row a boat er paddle a canoe d'ye know?" asked the old man craftily.

"Why, I don't know," answered the boy, sur-

prised. "Almost all the fellows I know can handle a boat. Why?"

"Wal, y'see, its like this," explained Pop hooking his arm through that of his young companion's and gently leading him away, "I bin sort o'tinker-in' eroun' an'—" his voice trailed off into a whisper as he set the simple process of his hard thought out plan into operation.

"I see," nodded the youth when the old man had finished. "We'll be glad to help you out. I'll round up the bunch and meet you wherever you say."

"Thet's right nice o'ye, son," replied the old man appreciatively. "I kinder tho't I c'd depend on ye. S'pose ye meet me eroun' ten t'morrer mornin' over by Fletcher's Cove? I'll hev eve'-thin' all ready fer ye."

"Fine!" agreed the youth. "Ten o'clock at Fletcher's Cove. I'll tell the gang now. So long!"

As the youth disappeared down the street, Pop Wilkins chuckled softly to himself. His plan, so far, had worked even better than he had expected. The most difficult part was over. The rest would be easy and he would be free, for a while at least, from his daughter's blistering tongue. With a light heart and a twinkle in his faded blue eyes, Pop Wilkins set out for home and supper, flagging the bus that ran out past the Jordan estate every hour.

In the meantime, Bob Spencer, the youth to whom Pop had confided his alleged difficulties and who, entirely unaware of the old man's plot-

ting, was acting in good faith had reached his house, and had immediately gone to the telephone where he called number after number until he had reached fifteen or twenty boys and made arrangements with them to meet the following morning at Fletcher's Cove, a half mile outside of Oakdale.

His simple evening meal over, Pop Wilkins waited his chance and, when, as he knew she would, his daughter left the little groundkeeper's lodge they shared on Amos Jordan's estate to spend the evening with Mrs. Sims, the gardener's wife, he slipped out and hurried over to the boathouse.

Working rapidly against the oncoming darkness for he did not wish to run the risk of discovery by switching on the light, Pop began work on the second step of his plan.

Suspended from especially constructed pegs along both walls of the boathouse were canoes of different sizes and weight and it was to these that the old man gave his undivided attention. As he worked, he chuckled softly to himself. He'd told Mr. Jordan several days ago, before his present idea had come into being, that the canoes would need looking after and now that conversation was going to come in handy, should questions be asked.

"Couldn't hev bin more slick ef I'd a thunk it out then!" he told himself with a self-satisfied grin.

It was becoming almost too dark to see when with a few deft touches Pop finished his work

and stepped back to let his eye wander appreciatively over what he had done. He had selected ten canoes of various sizes, eight of which now bore well concealed evidences of the ravages of time but the other two were absolutely seaworthy. Pop made sure of that.

Replacing his tools, the old man poked his head out of the door, looked cautiously about and, with the air of someone who has just committed murder, arson and robbery, stole swiftly out of the shed and hurried away.

The following morning two much battered and decrepit remains of what had once been automobiles were chugging along the road to Fletcher's Cove with various portions of human anatomy protruding from each. Upon close inspection, each head, arm or leg was found to be attached to a living whole which, in each case, turned out to be a young man. There were twenty such young men, ten to each vehicle and they were unwittingly about to assist Pop Wilkins in obtaining a much yearned for vacation from the sharp tongue and abrupt habits of Miss Elvira Wilkins, spinster.

Bob Spencer had told them what was expected of them and so they were not surprised when they arrived at the Cove to find Pop seated in the Jordan power launch with ten trim looking canoes bobbing at the stern.

As the boys disengaged themselves from the cars, Pop swung the launch a little closer to the dock.

"Hop in, fellers," he invited, "ye kin git inter th' canoes easier thisaway. Y'see," he explained

as the boys came aboard, "some o'them thar peanut shells needs fixin' an' th' on'y way ye kin tell is t'ride eroun' in 'em some t' see does they leak. I don' know much 'bout handlin' 'em so I figgered mebbe you fellers'd be kind ernuff t' sort 'o give me a hand."

As each boy eagerly professed his willingness to help the old man out for it was not every day that they had a chance to go canoeing, be the canoe leaky or otherwise, Pop Wilkins got a boat hook and one by one, swung the canoes over to the ladder that hung from the launch's side. As he brought each canoe into place, two boys clambered over the side and lowered themselves into the waiting vessel until each canoe had two occupants. Pop had taken care that his machinations of the evening before would not be detected for at least an hour and by that time the occasion to bring the third step of his plan into play would be at hand.

"No monkey shines, now," he cautioned as the boys shoved off, "head out t' th' middle o' th' lake an' I'll foller ye."

Waiting until the canoes were some distance away, Pop started the engine and set out after them, throttling down to low speed so that the tiny boats would not be capsized in the backwash.

They had been paddling about for a little more than an hour when, as Pop expected, first one and then another of the canoes began to show signs of distress. Slowly but surely eight of the canoes were sinking. Picking up his mega-

phone, the old man shouted directions to the crews of the doomed craft.

"Git ez near t'gether ez ye kin!" he shouted, "an' I'll pick ye up."

Fortunately the boys were too concerned with their immediate safety to detect the note of triumph in the old man's voice and as they manoeuvred their damaged craft as nearly together as they could, Pop shut off his engine and allowed the boat to drift to where the eight canoes were rapidly filling with water. Reaching over the side with his boathook, the old man grappled the nearest canoe and pulled it alongside.

"Bring thet rope up with ye," he directed the two youths who were about to desert their craft, "an' we'll haul 'er aboard."

Fastened to the stern of each canoe was a length of rope used to tie the boat to whatever mooring was convenient and it was by means of this that Pop, with the aid of the boys, brought the eight canoes whose seams the wily old man had partly sprung the night before, aboard the launch.

"Thanks, boys," Pop grinned when all were on board the launch. "Eight out o' ten's purty bad. Wouldn't o' known it though ef it hadn't bin fer ye."

Pop appeared to be lost in thought for a while. Now was the chance, the opportunity on which the whole plan was based. He cleared his throat and looked from one boy to the other.

"Y'know," he began innocently, "I bin thinkin',

Mr. Jordan aint a-goin, t' miss them two good canoes none. Whut say we run over t' Caliban Island an' let them gals hev th' use o' 'em while they're there?"

Instantly, as Pop had hoped and almost prayed—every face brightened and hands instinctively sought to smooth down rumpled hair and adjust much disarrayed and soiled clothing.

"Swell!" came the chorus of hearty assent. "We'll give 'em the surprise of their lives!"

"Kinder reckoned ye'd cotton t' th' idee!" chuckled the crafty Pop. "We'll cruise eroun' a bit so's ye' kin dry yer britches an' then drop over in time fer lunch."

A hot sun and a kindly breeze soon evaporated all the moisture from the boys' clothing that had become soaked when the canoes began to fill with water and as Pop swung the launch, which he knew to be stocked with provisions, for one of Amos Jordan's eccentricities was a thorough preparedness for every conceivable kind of emergency, toward the island, he smiled to himself as he beckoned to the boy nearest him. The time for the fourth and last step in his plan had arrived.

"Here, son," he directed, "hold th' wheel a secunt, will ye? Don' wiggle it er nuthin', jes' hold 'er like she is. I'm goin' below t' see how much gas we got left."

Pop knew perfectly well that both large gasoline tanks in the launch were well filled but they had sighted the island and a little harmless tinkering with the engine was necessary in order

to insure the absolute success of his plan. A moment's work with a screw driver and Pop knew that no power on earth could start the launch's engine again, once it was shut off, until the tiny bit of metal that now reposed in a pocket of his tattered vest was replaced. Trying to hide the smile of triumph that wreathed his sun burned old face, Pop returned to the deck and relived the amateur helmsman of his duties, an undertaking that the other boys had unsuccessfully tried before him.

"I reckon we got plenty gas," he announced as he pointed the nose of the boat in the direction of the island. "Leastaways ernuff t' git us thar an' back agin'."

Heading toward the landing stage, he shut off the engine, stuck his finger in his vest pocket to make sure the bit of metal was there and let the boat drift to the landing stage. As the boat bumped and scraped along the sides of the platform, Pop issued orders to make the vessel fast.

"Hop out, thar, fellers," he directed, "an' tie 'er up t' them posts. Don't make enny noise on account of how we're goin' t' seeprise th' gals."

"It certainly looks as though we were going to surprise them," replied one of the boys, "they haven't seen us, that's sure because if they had they would have been here to meet us."

"Maybe they did see us," answered another, "and are fixing up a surprise of their own."

"Whether they saw us or not," announced Bob Spencer, "it looks as though we'll have to cook our own lunch and raid their supplies to do it."

"And why should we, the guests, cook our lunch?" demanded David Lamb, a tall, freckle faced individual and admittedly the laziest youth in Oakdale.

"Because, bright eyes," replied Bob, "they have evidently concluded their mid-way repast. Behold! No smoke from fires over which savory steaks have sizzled ascends to yon heavens. No fragrant aroma of the camper's traditional bacon and beans assails our quivering nostrils. The feast is o'er and we, like poor, hungry dogs must beg for the scraps and leavings of our hostesses forest table."

"Put mine on rye with a dash of ketchup," yawned David lazily, "and go lay an egg for yourself."

"C'mon," urged a brawny looking youth who wore a sweat shirt with his name, John Wilson, written in large, indelible letters on the back, "lets go, they're around here someplace."

"Let's spread out," suggested a lithe looking, fair haired boy, Jim Dubbs, "and when one of us finds 'em, we can yell."

"A splendid idea, my boy," complimented David who had stretched himself out on the landing stage, "a splendid idea. I'll stay here and keep an eye on the boat and when you find the merry maidens and their store of goodies, you may bring me a snack, a substantial snack, mind you, one to fill the cavernous recesses of my innermost being."

"Them as don't look, don't eat," announced

Bob. "Rise, then and search if you would keep that miserable body of yours together."

"Reckon I'll go erlong with ye," announced Pop as the boys set out to search the island. "I c'd do with a bite m'self."

It did not take long to find the camp but it was deserted. Everything was left in a neat and orderly condition. The fires had been properly put out and the ashes buried, but the cots in the tents had not been made up for the day and to the boys who had just come upon the place, it seemed that the girls would return at any minute since, as far as they could see, no provisions had been taken and as the noon hour was at hand, it was plausible that they would return shortly for the mid-day meal. Deciding to wait the return of the girls and the other boys, some of whom, they were certain, had encountered them someplace on the island, David Lamb, John Wilson and Ted Hill, another one of the group of twenty boys, threw themselves down on the ground in front of the lean-to.

"Either this island is larger than it looks," suddenly began Ted, "or else if the others found the girls, they're keeping it a secret."

"Don't talk in riddles, Ted," begged David, "It's so exhausting. You're wondering why, if some of the fellows came across the girls, we haven't heard the characteristic girlish screams of alarm that are sure to follow upon their discovery?"

"I was thinking of the same thing," replied

John when another group of boys emerged from behind the tents.

"Find 'em?" called Ted and as Bob Spencer shook his head in reply, the other boys, attracted by their comrade's voices, gave up their search and headed for the camp, Pop Wilkins trailing along with them. Gathering around the lean-to they all reported the same failure and Pop saw his plans for a two week rest from his nagging daughter go glimmering. He had figured that after he had gotten the boys on the island, he'd tell them the engine had broken down and they, he shrewdly calculated, would be so engrossed in the girls' company, they would not notice and in fact be glad of the consequent long delay in getting back to Oakdale. He had intended to quietly slip back to Oakdale during the night and inform the boys' parents but now. . . . His melancholy train of thought was suddenly broken by Bob Spencer who had been comparing notes with the rest of the boys. Suddenly he jumped up, his face pale under its coat of tan.

"Fellows," he announced in hushed tones, "those girls are not on this island!"

Pop Wilkins looked up.

"How'd they git off?" he demanded. "I brung 'em here an' left 'em here without a boat. That's why I wuz bringin' them two canoes fer 'em, in case they wanted t' git eroun' a bit."

"I don't know how they got off, but I know they're not here," replied Bob. "We've covered every inch of this island and they're no place in sight!"

"What do you think we ought to do?" asked Ted, "Go back to Oakdale and get help?"

"I think thats best," replied Bob, "but lets have another look around first. Maybe we can find some clue concerning their whereabouts."

As the boys started out again, David, who, as usual, was lagging in the rear, suddenly turned around to see who was speaking to him but to his surprise, he saw no one. All the others, with the exception of Pop who had remained behind, were far ahead of him and he believed himself to be alone and yet he was sure he had distinctly heard a voice.

Listening, he heard it again and following the direction of the sound, came upon the length of the stovepipe that Alice had seen pushed through the ground. Dropping to his hands and knees, he bent his head down and the next second he was sprinting across the island after his comrades.

"For the love of Lulu, fellers!" he yelled, "C'mon back quick! I found 'em I just heard 'em! They're buried alive!"

Roughly Bob grabbed the thoroughly frightened David by the shoulders and shook him.

"What the deuce are you talking about?" he demanded. "Who's buried alive where?"

"The girls!" sputtered David. "I just heard 'em through a pipe in the ground! C'mon, I'll show you!"

Leading the incredulous Bob and the rest of the boys back to where he had heard the voices, David placed a finger to his lips for silence and pointed to the pipe between the rocks.

As the boys listened, their hearts seemed to stop beating as faint but clear, like a voice from a distant radio station, they heard Mrs. Evans address the girls!

CHAPTER VIII

Returning to their tents, Mrs. Evans and Alice were soon fast asleep. The other girls had not been disturbed and Mrs. Evans intended, because of the listening post just discovered by Alice, not to say anything at all about her recent adventure and to counsel Alice to keep the knowledge of the stovepipe to herself lest the men, hearing of the discoveries of herself and Alice, should try to do them some harm. The Camp Fire Guardian deemed it best to keep her secret to herself until, returning to Oakdale she could place the matter in the hands of the authorities. In the meantime, she intended to let the girls disport and conduct themselves as though nothing had occurred.

The small fire in the center of the area enclosed by the tents on one side and the lean-to on the other was burning very low, only a few flickering embers cast their feeble light, throwing queer, grotesque shadows on the ground. Peacefully and quietly the girls slept on. Suddenly a stick in the fire snapped, sending up a bright tongue of flame and countless myriads of sparks that died down almost as quickly as they leaped to life. But the gleam of light thrown off by that bright flash of flame was sufficient to reveal, for a fleeting instant, three or four dark figures scrambling

among the rocks near the camp! A moment later they had stealthily circled around behind the tents and came to a halt near the lean-to where they held a whispered consultation.

"We'll just stand in de middle," whispered one, "an' cover 'em as dey come out!"

"O. K." assented the others, 'lets go."

"Put dat fire out foist," commanded the first speaker, "so's dey won't see us!"

"Waddya t'ink I am, a fire department?" demanded another of the men irately. "Waddami gonna put it out wid?"

"Aw stick it in yer pocket an' shut up!" snapped the first speaker, "C'mon, we're wastin' time."

"Yeah, le's get goin," agreed another, "De chief'll be sore."

Stealthily the four men stepped out into the camp proper, their hands in their coat pockets. Taking their positions about twelve yards away from each other so that each man commanded the entrance of two or three tents, they removed their hands from their pockets and as the moon, peeping for a moment from behind the clouds looked on something bright and shiny in the right hand of each of the four men. Pointing his revolver toward the sky, one of the men fired a few shots, rousing the sleepers to instant wakefulness.

High in the tower of the city hall in Oakdale the watching policeman saw the spurts of flame that spat from the gun but the same thing had happened but a moment ago when the stick snapped in the fire for, to him, watching from a distance of more than five miles, both darts of

flame appeared to be identical, so he merely yawned and adjusted his chair to a more comfortable angle.

At once the entire camp was in an uproar. Girls came rushing out of their tents, clad only in their pyjamas and as Mrs. Evans sought to restore order, one of the men, none of whom the girls noticed in their excitement, issued a sharp command.

"We tol' ya t' keep offa here," he rasped as the girls spun about in sudden alarm, "an' ya didn't. O. K. Ye're gonna find out now what happens t' wise guys like you. I'm givin' ya five minnits t' get dressed an' anybody tryin' any fast ones gets extra special treatment from our Mr. Slug Malone. Scram, now an' I'm comin' after anyone not outta dem tents in five minnits. Anyone sneakin' out de back way gets plugged."

As the girls hastened to obey the gunman's commands, Mrs. Evans considered using her own gun from the shelter of her tent but discarded the plan almost immediately. It was too evident that some of the girls would suffer in the exchange of bullets and while she totally ignored her own safety, she would rather submit to capture than run the risk of harming her charges. Quickly dressing she looped her gun belt over one shoulder so that the holster containing the pistol was concealed under her arm and pulled her voluminous kahki blouse on over her head, leaving it open at the throat so that she could quickly reach the gun, should the occasion or necessity rise.

Herding the girls across the open space in front of the tents, the gangsters formed them into a line two abreast and proceeded to march them toward the rocky end of the island. As Alice passed the heap of dying embers that had once been their camp fire, something white fell from her clenched fist to the ground and although it landed in the ashes, as she looked back, her heart sank within her for there was no responding tongue of green flame. The fire had flickered and gone out.

Lighting their way with flashlights, the men, two at the end of the column and two at the head, led the bewildered girls up the rocky slope to the mouth of the cavern from which Mrs. Evans had returned but a short time before but instead of penetrating back into the interior of the cave, they led their victims sharply to the right just inside the entrance and down a steep incline that seemed to descend into the very center of the earth. Unlocking a door that barred their further progress, one of the men ordered the girls into a low, dark cavern that was barely large enough to hold them all. Standing in the doorway, he counted as they filed past him.

"Twenty one," he announced as the last girl entered the room. "Tip de chief off when he gets back, willya, Slug? I'm gonna hit de hay. You, Joe, keep an eye on dese dames an' if dey try anyt'ing, let 'em have it. An' don't let 'em vamp ya either."

As the heavy door closed, imprisoning them in the dark cavern, the girls burst into an excited

chatter of comment when their leader silenced them.

"Be quiet!" she whispered. "I have a plan that I think might work. I want you all to lie down and make yourselves as comfortable as possible."

The girls were able to find enough room for themselves on the floor while their leader applied her ear to a chink between the door and its frame. For some time she listened until she was sure that the man addressed as Joe was alone and then, placing her lips close to the crack she whispered to their jailer.

"Open this door at once!" she commanded. "I have a gun and I'll use it!"

"Dat's O. K. by me lady," came the calm reply. "Dis here door happens t' be steel, see? An' anybody dat kin shoot t'roo a quarter inch steel door wit a ordinary rod oughta be in dis racket."

Quickly the dismayed leader ran her hands over the surface of the door. What the man said was all too true. Cold steel instead of rough wood encountered her exploring fingers and she turned from the door, to face the waiting girls thoroughly disheartened. Although it was two o'clock in the morning, further sleep was out of the question and, as Mrs. Evans and the girls wondered what was going to happen next, the door opened and the bright rays of a large flashlight cut through the darkness around them.

"Please accept my humble apologies if I've disturbed you," came a voice startlingly familiar to two of the prisoners, "but I'm afraid this intrusion is really quite necessary."

Dolores caught her breath with a sharp gasp as she recognized the voice. Until the very moment that she heard it in her underground prison she had firmly believed the man who had introduced himself as George Preston to really be the nationally known lawyer. Mrs. Evans too, had believed that the man was the famous character he had represented himself to be until she saw him some hours ago in conference with his cronies. Now she knew she had to deal with a hardened and very much experienced criminal. Drawing herself up to her full height, she addressed her captor.

"I demand an explanation of this outrage, sir!" she snapped as the listening girls thrilled, despite their fear, at the absolute courage and coolness of their leader. "I insist we be released at once!"

The man laughed good naturedly.

"I'm afraid," he drawled, "that as much as it is my fondest desire to show you every courtesy and give you every attention while you and your charming young ladies are my guests, I cannot accede to your request, for the present, at least."

"In that case," replied Mrs. Evans evenly, her hand playing with the collar of her blouse, "You force me to take the initiative!" and before the surprised gang leader could move, he was looking into the muzzle of the Camp Fire Guardian's automatic.

Anita, who was lying near the door, did not have to be told what to do. With a swift movement she leaped to her feet and swung the heavy

steel door shut. With the aid of the captured gangster's flashlight, she found a steel bolt fastened to the door frame and a second later, it slid smoothly into its groove on the door with an efficient click.

"Feel his pockets for a gun," directed Mrs. Evans as one by one the other girls rose to their feet. Together Mabel and Anita carried out their leader's orders and drew forth from the coat pocket of the surprised man a heavy army revolver. "Now then, Mr. Preston," smiled the triumphant Camp Fire leader, "what have you to say for yourself?"

The man maintained a sullen stunned silence and as Mabel gave Mrs. Evans his gun she saw his eyes move shiftily about. Following the direction of his furtive glance, Mabel noticed that as they roamed apparently aimlessly about the cave, they seemed to rest longer on a certain place in the back wall. Unable to detect any difference in the wall from where she stood, she began to push her way through the crowded room to examine the wall when suddenly a piercing scream rang out and as she whirled about something heavy struck her in the chest and she went crashing down with a struggling, frantic heap of girls on top of her. Mad confusion reigned as the girls struggled and milled about trying to untangle themselves and regain their feet and the next thing Mabel remembered was opening her eyes to find her head in Mrs. Evans' lap with the other girls bending anxiously over her.

"What happened?" she asked thickly, strug-

gling to a sitting position. She was surprised that she was still able to move and as Mrs. Evans helped her rise to her feet, she gave a sudden, involuntary gasp of pain and tenderly placed her hand over her chest. "Somebody must have been kind enough to step on my chest," she groaned. "What was the stampede about? Was somebody giving out free samples?"

"We're all bruised and battered somewhat," explained Mrs. Evans ruefully. "Our hostage got away from us. I could have shot him but I was afraid of hitting some of the girls."

"So that's what he was looking at!" exclaimed Mabel. "I saw him look at the back wall and I was going over to see what it was that seemed to interest him so much when I heard a scream and then something hit me in the chest and I just woke up."

"I screamed," confessed Mrs. Evans. "He struck me too, grabbed both guns and got away."

"Well," responded Alice, "if he got out through some secret door in that wall, maybe we could find it and get out too. It wouldn't hurt to try and it would be something to do. Wherever that door is, it probably leads outside instead of to another part of the cave and as long as it's still dark, we might be able to escape. We can divide up into groups and examine all the walls until we find the door."

"But what makes you think that this secret door leads outside?" demanded Mrs. Evans.

"Why, haven't you noticed?" exclaimed Alice, a note of surprise in her voice. "Here we are, in

an underground cavern and as packed as sardines and yet none of us are suffocating. We're getting fresh air from someplace and evidently that someplace is the cracks in that secret door."

"Why so we are!" exclaimed Mrs. Evans, "I never noticed it. How many of you girls have your flashlights with you?"

As an answering chorus arose, the Guardian, after counting the number of girls so equipped, divided the girls into groups as Alice had suggested and assigned one girl with a flashlight to each group.

"The best way to find that door," she directed, "is to run your hands carefully along the walls until you feel a draft of wind. Use the flashlights sparingly because once they're gone, we'll be totally in the dark."

Due to their cramped quarters, not all the girls could assist in the search. The room was low enough to allow the taller girls among whom was Dolores, to reach up almost to the ceiling and as they went about their task Mrs. Evans advised the others to make themselves as comfortable as they could on the floor.

"This is necessarily slow work," she announced "and I think it best if we worked in shifts. Those of you who are not searching, lie down and rest yourselves so that you will be refreshed when your turn comes."

As the slow work progressed, Mrs. Evans set herself to the discouraging task of considering the present situation. Everything now depended on the finding of that secret door. If that failed,

she admitted to herself with a shudder, they were totally at the mercy of their unscrupulous captors.

Time wore on and the girls were still at their work. The second shift took the place of the first but still no welcome breeze blew against the fingers of the tired, seeking girls. Mrs. Evans glanced at her watch. It was five o'clock in the morning.

"It's no use, girls," she announced wearily. "We've covered every inch of these walls and we're all dead tired. Let's try to get some sleep. Perhaps I can make some arrangement with our former prisoner when he comes back, as I'm sure he will."

The girls needed no second invitation to lie down and soon the dingy little cavern was filled with the quiet, regular breathing of twenty sleeping girls but tired as she was, there was no sleep for Mrs. Evans. Although she lay down with the girls and pretended to sleep, her brain was a busy whirl of doubts, fears and plans.

When she had returned from the cave on her first visit, she had determined to signal to the watching policeman in Oakdale in the morning since she did not wish to run the risk of having the green fire being seen by the men on the island but now she bitterly berated herself for not casting the little package of boric acid crystals into the fire as soon as she returned to camp. However she told herself, there was no use in crying over spilled milk and she set herself to the difficult and practically impossible task of thinking a way out of the present difficulty.

Plan after plan presented itself in her mind and one after the other they were discarded as either impossible, impractical or both. Sighing deeply she carefully, so as not to disturb the sleeping girls around her, turned over on her back, her eyes half closed. The next instant they flew wide open and she sat bolt upright, her surprised gaze fastened on the ceiling. Nature had succeeded where she and the girls had failed for there, directly above her, was a tiny spot of daylight peeping through an opening in the ceiling!

As the light grew stronger, a few rays of sunshine crept into the underground prison and Mrs. Evans' heart leaped high with the hope of escape. The light was not strong enough to illuminate the cavern and as the Camp Fire leader sent the last feeble rays of her almost spent flashlight around the ceiling in the hope of finding the means of egress that the tiny opening seemed to promise, a feeling of disappointment welled up within her as the fast fading beams of her electric torch showed only the unbroken rock of the ceiling with a few inches of stovepipe protruding from the center and through which the speck of daylight filtered. Suddenly she remembered Alice's discovery of the night before and she knew that they were almost directly underneath their camp. Slowly a disheartening thought came to her. She had been over every inch of that ground and so had the girls but not one trace of a secret passageway did they find. It was to the opening overhead that they owed their supply of fresh air. The secret door through which their erst-

while prisoner had escaped led to another part of the underground network of caverns that the gangsters were using as headquarters.

It was useless, she knew, to wake the girls from their much needed sleep merely to look at a bit of stovepipe sticking through a hole in the ceiling that was much too tiny to even consider as a means of escape so, with a last, despairing look around, she fell into a light sleep from which she was awakened some six hours later by the stirring of the girls around her as they woke, surprised for the moment at their strange surroundings.

Aside from feeling the urgent necessity of washing, the girls were ravenously hungry. It was noon and they had not had anything to eat since supper the night before. It was while Mrs. Evans was announcing her intention to ask their guard to summon the pseudo Mr. Preston so that they might come to terms that David Lamb heard her voice and ran as he never ran before to summon the others.

CHAPTER IX

"We must come to some sort of agreement with our captors," the wonder-struck, listening boys gathered around the pipe heard Mrs. Evans say. "We have been here almost twelve hours without food or drink—"

"Gee whiz!" whispered one of the boys, "Twelve hours in that hole with nothing to eat! We've got to get 'em out!"

"Yes, but how?" inquired Ted Hill. "Pull 'em up through the pipe?"

"Why in tarnation don't ye ask 'em how they got in?" demanded Pop Wilkins testily. "Ef ye kin hear 'em, they kin hear ye."

"Good idea, Pop," replied Bob Spencer. "Quiet now, you birds." Placing his mouth close to the opening of the pipe, he called down. Had the cave suddenly split in two or risen to the surface, the girls could have been no more surprised than they were at hearing Bob's voice above them.

"What's the idea?" he called. "Playing hide and seek with us?"

"Who is that?" demanded Mrs. Evans since she was unable to recognize the voice due to the sound distortion caused by the pipe.

"It's me, Bob Spencer," the youth replied. "Pop Wilkins brought a bunch of us fellows over a

while ago to surprise you and present you with a couple of canoes."

As the girls received the information, the boys could hear an excited buzz of conversation and Mrs. Evans' pleas for quiet so that she could instruct the boys how to proceed. In a few words she told them what had happened.

"Return to Oakdale at once," she directed, "and get help. These men are dangerous criminals and will stop at nothing to gain their ends. We're depending on you. Please hurry."

"Alright," promised Bob, "but how about something to eat first? You must be starved. Where are your supplies? We can lower some food down to you through this hole."

Relaying Mrs. Evans' directions where to find the food supply in the lean-to to the other boys, Bob dispatched David and Ted to get the provisions while he turned to the others.

"John, you go back to the launch with Pop and while he gets the engine started, you bring the longest length of rope you can find back here," he directed. "Pete, you, Gordon and Dick go back to Oakdale with Pop and bring back all the cops you can find. I don't know how many criminals there are on this island. The rest of us will stay here until you come back."

As the boys hastened away on their various duties, Bob turned to the tube again and informed Mrs. Evans of what he had done.

"I think you had all better go back," she advised. "If they catch you here, it will probably be much the worse for all of us."

"Don't worry," Bob assured her calmly. "We can take care of ourselves."

Returning with the canvas sacks of provisions they had found in the lean-to, David and Ted began unpacking them while Bob began tying such food-stuffs as could be eaten without cooking to one end of the rope John had brought back from the boat. Time and again the rope slid down through the stove pipe with its precious load and each time came up with the paper in which the food had been wrapped tied to its end for Mrs. Evans was taking no chances of having the boys discovered by leaving tell-tale scraps of paper around as evidence of outside assistance. Finally she called up through the pipe.

"That's enough, Bob," she announced, "we've eaten all we want. Thanks loads. Now hurry back to Oakdale before it's too late."

"Pop's getting the engine of the launch started now," Bob replied but even as he spoke, the old man was seen approaching the camp, the picture of utter dejection.

"What's the matter, Pop?" asked Bob as he saw the old man's look of despair. "Can't you get the launch started?"

"Nope," he replied sadly, "an' it serves me right too. Ef ennythin' happens t' ye, it's all my fault fer bein' a selfish, schemin' ol' fool!" And as he sat down on a rock and buried his face in his hands, he confessed to the surprised boys his carefully thought out, elaborate plan to escape the brow beatings of his shrewish daughter, "Ever'thin' would'a bin alright," he continued,

"ef I hadn't o' gone an' lost thet thar gol blame timin' pin!"

"You took the timing pin out of the engine?" exclaimed Bob in surprise.

"Yep," nodded the old man sadly, "I tho't thet when't'wuz time t' go home an' I tol' ye I could'n start th' boat—"

But Bob listened no further. Turning to the amazed group of boys behind him, he picked out four.

"Al," he directed, "you, Bert, Milt and Sam know more about handling a canoe than any of us. You take those two good canoes and light out for Oakdale as fast as you can. And among other things, bring back a timing pin for the launch," he added as the boys raced off toward the landing stage.

Again turning to the stovepipe, he informed Mrs. Evans of recent developments, relating Pop's sad plight at great length for the girl's amusement. As he was speaking, he was suddenly interrupted by a loud 'sh!' from Mrs. Evans.

"Someone's coming," she whispered and as Bob and the other boys listened, they heard the sound of a door opening and heavy footsteps on the hard rock floor.

"Well," came a deep masculine voice, "how are my charming guests this morning? So sorry I had to leave you in such a hurry last night! I do hope you will forgive me."

"How long do you intend to keep us here?" Mrs. Evans demanded frigidly. "What do you intend to do with us?"

"Well now," laughed the man, "I'm afraid you're asking a little too much, really! You see, I don't know the answers myself. However, I assure you that as soon as I have reached a decision, you shall be the first to know. And now, what would the young ladies like for lunch? Roasted breast of chicken, perhaps, with Waldorf salad? Quail on toast? Or the coffee and bread they are going to get?"

Mrs. Evans and the girls maintained a stony silence while their captors gloated over their discomfort. Presently the boys heard more steps approaching and the rattle of tin dishes and cups on the stone and then finally the clang of steel as the heavy door swung shut again told them that the men had departed.

Having cautioned the boys not to roam over the island since they might be seen by one of the gangsters, a fact that prevented Mrs. Evans from asking Bob to signal the policeman in the tower, the boys stayed in the camp and kept up a running fire of conversation with the girls below while they waited for the four canoeists to reach Oakdale and return with help. It had occurred to Mrs. Evans that the watching policeman might be able to distinguish the difference between boys and girls, even at a distance of five miles and, sensing trouble, would send help when she remembered that with the girls wearing short hair and kahki breeches it was hard enough to tell the difference at close range.

Bob had figured that it would take the boys about two and a half hours to paddle back to Oakdale,

fifteen minutes to ride from Fletcher's Cove to town and spread the alarm and a half hour for the returning police to reach the island, making a total of three hours and fifteen minutes they would have to wait. It was approximately one thirty when the boys set out and so, he informed Mrs. Evans, he believed help should arrive by five o'clock. But Bob figured without the forces of Nature. True, the boys he had sent on the mission to obtain aid were all good canoeists but the way was long and the sun was hot and although they did their best, they were forced to stop more and more frequently to rest and to lave their burning hands and heads in the cool waters of the lake. And so it was that five o'clock came and went, bringing with it only a sinking sun and lowered spirits but no sign of aid from Oakdale.

As six o'clock approached, Bob again lowered his food laden rope into the cavern and this time the hungry boys partook of some of the provisions themselves. As Bob was lowering the rope for the last time, the island suddenly shook like so much jelly and the low flat end raised itself up before the eyes of the startled boys and slowly sank back again. Rumbly sounds seemed to roll up out of the very interior of the place and as Bob communicated the strange happenings to Mrs. Evans he was surprised at her calm reply.

"Yes, I know," she answered matter of factly. "Those noises and vibrations are only the big dynamos and distributing units being started for the night's work of supplying extra power to the

surrounding towns, and that raising and lowering of the end of the island simply means our hosts have gone out in their submarine that they keep under that end of the island. They've probably gone to drum up more business."

"It's a wonder they haven't been caught," replied Bob. "Surely, if they're bucking a big company like Southwestern with crooked tactics they must have run afoul of the law sometime."

"I daresay they have," replied Mrs. Evans, "but the man you just heard talking to us happens to be not only the head of the gang but a very clever lawyer."

"You bet he is," Mabel called up. "Just ask Dolores!"

That was the signal for much bantering and rapid cross fire conversation as Anita, Lenore, Dolores, Mabel and Alice, together with the rest of the girls teased and twitted the boys about one thing and another and they, in turn, threatened to keep them imprisoned underground indefinitely.

Night was rapidly approaching and as Bob recalled Mrs. Evans' explanation of the island's upheaval, he thought it safe to build a fire since the gangsters had gone away. Noticing where the camp fire of the night before had been, he decided to build a large fire there to guide the returning boys with the much hoped for help, and another smaller one where he and the rest of the boys had taken up their places by the stovepipe.

The boys soon had a large pile of brushwood,

twigs and logs piled up and as the dry wood quickly caught and the flames went roaring up into the night, there was a sudden hissing sound and the fire turned a bright, glaring green! Alice's package of boric acid crystals was sending its message to Oakdale!

Hearing the boys making their preparations for a fire, Mrs. Evans called up.

"Are you boys going to build a fire?" she asked.

"We've built a big one already to show the others the way but the fool thing's turned green," replied Bob, "it must be something in the wood."

"Green?" echoed Mrs. Evans and several of the girls who overheard Bob's reply.

"Why yes," replied the youth, "why?"

"Quick, Bob!" answered Mrs. Evans, "lower your rope!"

As he did so, the Camp Fire leader tied her little package of crystals to it.

"Alright," she called, "pull it up and throw that little package into your big fire."

Following her instructions Bob was surprised to see the fire burn even a brighter green than before and as the boys watched in amazement, joy and relief reigned below for now help was certain. Even if something happened to prevent the four boys from reaching Oakdale, their signal would be seen.

"Alice," began Mrs. Evans in surprise, "you had the rest of those crystals. How did you manage to get them into the fire?"

Modestly the girl told how, when the gunmen had marched them across the camp, she had

thrown the package which she had snatched up while dressing, into the dying embers of the fire, hoping that it would catch.

"And fortunately the boys built their fire over our old one!" finished Mrs. Evans.

In the meantime, the green fire had been instantly seen by the alert watcher in Oakdale who lost no time in informing his superiors of the fact. Seizing the telephone at his elbow, he immediately phoned headquarters and the next two minutes saw Oakdale change from a quiet, sleepy little town to a very beehive of swift activity. Sirens screamed as three carloads of men in blue raced along the road to Fletcher's Cove where the two trim police cruisers were kept. As they sped along the highway, a dilapidated old wreck of a car coming from the opposite direction swung to the far side of the road to give them room and four very tired boys looked from one to the other in dismay.

"Follow 'em, Al!" yelled one of the boys, "they're goin' to get their boats out of the Cove!"

Swinging the battered old car around, the boys arrived at the Cove just as the second police boat was about to speed out into the night.

"Hey, wait a minute!" the four called in unison and, without waiting for an invitation, they ran out on the landing stage and leaped into the boat just as it was getting under way. Breathlessly they told their story and as the police captain listened, he nodded his head.

"Those are the chaps, alright," he announced grimly. "I hope to heaven we're in time!"

Sergeant Blake was in the first cruiser and as they cut through the water at terrific speed, he shouted instructions to his men to shoot on sight if the slightest evidence of harm to the girls was evident.

In the meantime, the huge camp fire had attracted the attention of those of the gangsters left behind on the island to guard the prisoners and attend the dynamos. Leaving a man at the door leading to the low dingy cavern in which the girls were locked and another to keep the dynamos running until they should return, Slug Malone and Mike Rocco, two of the underworld's most hardened gangsters, stole forth to investigate the fires.

Carefully reconnoitering, they saw they had but a handful of boys to deal with and so, abandoning their caution, they drew their guns and stepped into the fire light.

"Reach fer de moon!" they commanded the surprised boys, "and make it snappy! Wot is dis anyway, a Sunday school picnic? Foist dem skoits an' now youse guys!"

The boys, seated around the small fire by the stovepipe leading to the underground prison were taken completely off their guard. As their hands rose above their heads, one of the men noticed that they had discovered the listening post installed by them the day before.

"So," he sneered, "y'like t'talk t' de dames, eh? O. K. I'm big hearted. I'll fix it so's y' won't have t' holler down no stovepipe. Get up!"

"Whatcha gonna do wit 'em, Slug?" asked his companion.

"Well," replied Slug, "seein' as how dey likes t'talk t' dem skoits, I figgered we might as well put 'em in de same room wit 'em so's dey won't have t' strain demselves yellin' down dat pipe."

"Dats a good idea," approved Mike, "an' dis ol' boy," pointing to Pop, "kin be dere chappyrone."

"Yeah," grinned Slug, not having the slightest idea of what a chaperone was. "We'll do dat."

The boys had risen to their feet, their hands still above their heads. Advancing toward them, Slug and Mike began roughly shoving them about preparatory to marching them off when, like the crack of a whip a sharp command rang out on the still night air.

"Drop those guns and reach high! We've got you covered!"

CHAPTER X

As though released by some hidden spring, Slug and Mike spun around and fired their revolvers point blank into the shadows and then, whirling about again they were about to dash away toward their cavern hideout when, with clock like precision, Bob Spencer and Ted Hill swung their fists with telling force straight to the jaws of their antagonists. To the gangsters it was like running head on into a stone wall. Their heads snapped back and they collapsed limply to the ground.

"Good work, boys!" cried Sergeant Blake running up a second later, "Where are the girls?"

As two of the score or more of policemen that closed in on the camp from all directions snapped a pair of handcuffs on each of the still unconscious gangsters, Bob told the amazed group of officers as much as he knew of the happenings of the past eighteen hours.

But Sergeant Blake left his captain to hear the rest of the story. As soon as Bob told them about the underground prison and the stovepipe through which they had communicated with the girls, the Sergeant flung himself to the ground and called down the tube.

"Alice," he called, "Alice, are you alright?"

"Oh Dad!" cried Alice joyfully as the other

girls milled and pressed around her excitedly, "is that you? I'm so glad you've come! Is everything alright? We just heard some shooting."

"Everything's alright," he assured her gayly, "Tell us how to get down there and we'll have you out in a jiffy."

Then, as Mrs. Evans gave the Sergeant directions for finding the cave entrance and reaching the underground prison, she cautioned the listening officer that there probably were more men scattered about in the caverns, men who would shoot on sight.

"Don't you worry about us," replied the Sergeant, "we'll take care of 'em!"

Leaving a man to guard the slowly awakening Mike and Slug, Sergeant Blake and Captain Hart took their men, revolvers ready for any sudden emergency to the cave entrance. Powerful flashlights were brought into play, brightly illuminating the interior of the cave. While Captain Hart and the rest of the policemen explored the cave, Sergeant Blake cautiously proceeded down the rocky incline over which the girls were led as captives and with a sudden leap, surprised and overpowered the unsuspecting and somnolent Joe at the entrance to the girls' prison. It was but the work of a moment to slide back the heavy bar that held the door fast and as he appeared in the doorway, standing over the form of the prostrate Joe, Sergeant Blake was greeted with cheer after rousing cheer by the happy girls who surged and crowded around him. It was with difficulty that Mrs. Evans silenced the girls

while the happy Sergeant clasped his equally happy daughter to him.

When at last Mrs. Evans had succeeded in restoring order and quiet, Sergeant Blake, his arm around his daughter's shoulders, addressed the girls.

"I'm afraid, I'll have to ask you to stay here a while longer," he announced, "until we get this place cleaned out. There's liable to be shooting and I don't want to run the risk of having any of you hit."

As the girls protested against further imprisonment for they were all eager to get out of their dirty, confining quarters, Mrs. Evans told Sergeant Blake how her prisoner of the night before escaped.

"So you see," she concluded, "if we remain here, they will probably get in through that secret door and hold us as hostages, forcing you to let them go."

"Hm, that's right," agreed the sergeant, "I'll get some men and have you escorted back to camp and order them to stay there with you."

Bob and the other boys, who had been listening at the stovepipe held a hurried consultation and then Bob called down to the sergeant and the girls below.

"If you'll pardon me for saying so," he called, "I seem to have an idea. Why not let us come down and escort the girls back to camp? You'll need all the men you have and I guess we can take care of ourselves. What do you say?"

As Bob waited for Sergeant Blake's reply, he

could hear him discuss his proposal with Mrs. Evans. Finally the police officer called up through the pipe.

"All right, Bob," he replied, "come on down. I'll ask Captain Hart to withhold his attack until you're all back in camp."

Listening until Sergeant Blake had completed his directions to Bob telling him how to reach the cave, the boys started out in a body, arming themselves with stout sticks as they went. Reaching the cave, they were met by a policeman who went with them down the rocky slope to where the girls were waiting. Upon the sergeant's instructions, the boys formed a sort of hollow square inside which the girls grouped themselves and in the manner they proceeded back to camp, leaving the policeman who had conducted the boys to the cavern to trap any of the gangsters who sought to escape by the secret door.

In the meantime, Captain Hart had captured the lone attendant of the dynamos and from him had wrung much information concerning the comings and goings of his superior and his henchmen. It appeared, from what the man told the police, that the leader of the gang was keeping his identity secret from all his followers, save one, since the only name the captured gangster and his cronies knew him by was "boss" of "chief." However, he did know what was going on and it did not take much persuasion to induce him to loosen his tongue. He considered himself underpaid for the job to which he was assigned and he saw in his confession a chance

to revenge himself on his employer for his niggardliness.

The gang owned a submarine, as Mrs. Evans had heard and which was kept in a huge rocky cavern underneath the low end of the island. It had taken much hard work over a period of years, the man said, to loosen that end of the island in such a manner that when entering or leaving its moorings, the submarine could push it up for otherwise the use of the undersea vessel would be impractical since the lake around the island was too shallow to permit the submarine to submerge low enough to enter the natural, water filled cavern under that end of the island and which was connected, by a series of labyrinthine passageways, with the caverns at the other end in which the gang had its headquarters. Their manner of operation was very simple. The gang leader and some of his followers would call on the mayor or councilmen of some town, representing themselves as advance agents for a new power company organized under state rights and proceed to sell their services. In every instance they quoted a rate lower than that being charged by the bona fide company and when the town officials protested that they had a contract with the real company and could not accept the newcomer's proposition, the wiley gang leader would show the surprised aldermen how to break that contract and still be within the law. Failing that, the town would suddenly find itself deprived of its electrical supply. Investigation by the company's repair crew would usually show a

serious short circuit in the power lines or some mysterious magnetic interference. Continued interrupted service would usually result in a avoidance of the contract the town had with the state power company. At this juncture, the gang leader would pay another visit to the town and leave with a contract for his stolen power in his pocket.

Attempts had been made by the real power company, with the aid of local and state authorities, to apprehend the clever gangster. Roads were watched and airports and railroad stations checked but since all his comings and goings were by means of the submarine, he was never tracked down or apprehended. No one ever suspected Caliban Island as being the headquarters of the gang because not only was it private property belonging to a wealthy and upright, if somewhat erratic, citizen but there were no buildings on the place where the gang could install their equipment. No one, not even Mr. Jordan to whom the island belonged before he gave it to the Camp Fire Girls, ever knew of the network of caves and underground passages with which the island was honeycombed.

The gang leader had discovered it some years ago while spending a summer at one of the nearby vacation resorts. He had been fishing in the lake and not knowing the island was private property and caring less, he had landed and thoroughly explored the place. Satisfied that it would make an ideal hideout, he made inquiries concerning its ownership. Finding out that the

island was privately owned but unused and deserted he made a mental note of it and some months later, while in Oakdale, he hit upon the scheme of stealing the town's power and selling it to the adjacent towns, using the island as headquarters and main distributing point. He had been successful in his venture until Amos Jordan gave the island, out of appreciation for services rendered, to the Camp Fire Girls.

Seeing an account of the gift in the newspapers and knowing the girls would use the island, he had hurried to Oakdale from his home in Chicago where he was all too well known to the police rented the Tucker place and first, by trying to gain the girls' confidence through Dolores who proved a willing dupe for his trumped up story and later by his unsuccessful attempt to frighten them from going to the island by a threatening long distance telephone call, tried to keep them away.

Having failed to keep them off the island, he had determined to kidnap them as soon as news reached him that they were aware of his machinations. It was for this reason that he had caused the stovepipe with a microphone hidden in it to be placed near the camp and as soon as the gangster who had been assigned to listen to the girls' conversation heard Alice and Mrs. Evans speak when the latter returned from her dangerous trip to the cave, he had ordered their abduction, intending to so frighten them with horrible threats that they would be afraid to tell what had happened or of what they had seen when he

released them and ordered them back to Oakdale.

At the moment, the unscrupulous gang leader and his men were in some town nearby where they had gone in their submarine which had been purchased from the government after the war. When a destination was reached, the submarine would rise to the surface and a small boat would be put out in which the gang leader would be rowed to shore, landing at the point just within the town's limits. From there he and his men either walked or took a bus into town, returning in a like manner. The trips made by the under water craft were many and varied, no special time or date governed its comings and goings and no one could tell when it would return once it had left its base.

As the man finished his story, the island began to rumble and shake like a live volcano and as the policemen looked about in alarm to see what was causing the island's mysterious actions, their prisoner explained them.

"Dat's de chief comin' back now," he informed the men. "Dat noise an' shakin' is made by de machinery liftin' up de end o' de island so's de sub kin git in. An' lissen, buddy," he added to Captain Hart and Sergeant Blake as an after thought, "if I wuz you, I'd be mighty careful. Dey got a machine gun aboard dat sub an' dey knows how t' use it."

But Captain Hart and Sergeant Blake had a well formulated plan of attack already mapped out that included just such a possibility.

Placing their men at strategic positions in the

various caves and passageways, Sergeant Blake and Captain Hart waited until the gang leader and his henchmen were well within the room in which Mrs. Evans saw them when she explored the cave.

There were three men beside the leader and, suspecting nothing, they entered the room. One of the men turned to address his superior and the next moment his eyes fairly bulged from their sockets as every ounce of blood drained from his face.

"What's the matter, Lefty?" laughed the leader, noticing his companion's strained expression, "you look as though you'd seen a ghost!"

"Cops!" gasped the amazed and frightened Lefty.

It was over in a second. The police had followed the gangsters into the room and stood in the doorway until, turning around, Lefty had seen them.

A renewed search of the caverns revealed three more men who acted as the crew of the submarine when necessary and electricians for the vast outlay of equipment when their services as sailors were not required.

The entire gang was taken into custody without a shot being fired or a blow dealt and, as the listening boys heard the gangsters surrender without even trying to put up a fight, their disappointment was keen.

As the police marched their captives down to the landing stage and ordered them aboard the cruisers, Sergeant Blake joined his daughter in

the camp. It did not require much teasing or cajoling on Alice's part to obtain her father's consent to an idea that she had.

"Come on, Dad, please!" she begged, "we'll be afraid alone here if you don't stay after what's happened."

"Oh, alright, I'll stay," laughed the sergeant good humoredly and calling to one of his men, he told him to inform Mrs. Blake of his intention to spend the night on the island but his words were drowned out by a loud, long whoop from the boys.

"Swell!" they chorused. "Now we can stay too! We'll use some of those caves to sleep in!" and as one of the boys ran down to the landing stage to tell Captain Hart to ignore any reports of kidnappings concerning himself and his companions, Dolores looked at Mabel, Mabel looked at Lenore, Lenore looked at Anita and they all looked at Alice who was trying her best to maintain a modest unsmiling expression but the knowing glances of her friends was too much for her and suddenly they all began to giggle for each girl knew as well as Alice did herself that if Sergeant Blake stayed, the boys stayed too and despite the fact that the police officer was her father, there were those among the girls who were willing to bet that Alice would not have pleaded half as hard were he alone.

CHAPTER XI

The next day, the boys, who were used to sleeping late each morning during the summer vacation and who, moreover, were tired after their unusual experience of the night before, were suddenly and rudely roused from their slumbers by a series of violent rumblings, which in the hollow, underground caverns, sounded twice as loud and awesome as they did when they were first heard on the surface of the island.

Hastily dressing themselves, they were about to rush outside to see what was happening when the sound of high, girlish voices above the deeper undertones of Sergeant Blake reached them faintly from a remote cavern. Following the sounds, the boys soon came upon the girls clustered around an imposing array of machinery with Sergeant Blake explaining the uses and functions of the various switches and levers with which one wall of the cavern was filled. He was supplementing his explanation with practical demonstrations and since the apparatus controlled the raising and lowering of the narrow end of the island, the rumble of the machinery in motion and the vibration caused by the rising and falling of the opposite end of the island hand served as an alarm clock for the boys, which was as the girls hoped for since they were to have the

company of their guests for only one day, they were anxious to make the most of their opportunity.

As soon as the boys put in their appearance, all thought of the machinery vanished from the girls' minds and although the boys were anxious to tinker with the apparatus themselves, they were lured away by the promise of breakfast.

"Too bad we didn't bring our bathing suits," David Lamb lamented as he cast a longing eye at the lake on the way to the girls' camp, "that water is sure tempting."

"I reckon thet kin be fixed," smiled Pop Wilkins, overhearing David's plaint which had been taken up by the rest of the boys. "Ef I rec'lect right, thar's a hull slew o' swimmin' suits in th' lockers on th' launch thet I reckon 'll fit ye."

The announcement was greeted with loud cheers and as the girls set about preparing breakfast for the boys, they went down to the lake to perform their morning ablutions while Pop repaired to the launch to raid the lockers for bathing suits.

Since it was almost noon, the girls combined the best features of both lunch and breakfast in their cooking which, because the day was very hot, was done in the rock lined holes in the ground dug for just that purpose.

After all preparations for the meal had been made, the girls repaired to their tents to don their bathing suits while the boys raced down

to the landing stage to see what luck Pop had had in finding suits for them.

The old man's memory had served him well for as the boys clambered aboard the launch they met him emerging from below with an armfull of suits of varied and assorted sizes and shapes. Throwing them down on the deck, he waved an all-including arm.

"Thar ye be," he announced, "take ye're pick. Ain't none o' 'em bin used, near ez I kin remember, fer—fer quite a spell, ennyway."

Picking over the varied assortment, the boys after discarding the voluminous, out moded and moth eaten garments, finally managed to find enough trunks and tops that, while not fitting as perfectly as they would have liked, were at least serviceable and, in a large sense, whole.

Pop was thoroughly enjoying his vacation, brief as it was to be and as the boys re-appeared on deck after going below to get into their bathing suits, they stopped in open mouthed amazement at the sight that met their eyes.

Taking advantage of a situation and an opportunity that, for all he knew, would never arise again, Pop had waited until the boys had gone below to change and then, snatching the first suit he laid his hands on, had ducked behind the raised deck of the companionway and put it on.

Pop Wilkins would never see sixty again and as the boys beheld his skinny old frame from which the bathing suit that was almost as old as he was hung in voluminous folds, they tried

hard not to laugh at the ludicrous picture he presented. But Pop was having too good a time to care about what the boys or anyone else thought. This was his holiday and he was enjoying it immensely.

"Go ahead an' laff ef ye want to," he chuckled, seeing the strained expressions on the boys' faces, "I cal'late I'm a sight fer sore eyes, alright but dawggone ef jes' a-gittin' inter this here outfit don't make me feel young agin'!"

"Boy, oh boy!" gasped Bob, tears of laughter streaming down his face, "won't you make a hit with the girls, though! We won't have a chance!"

"Think that's a joke, do ye?" grinned Pop. "Wal, jes' watch m'smoke! By cracky, I'll larn ye a thing er two!"

"Better not try to run in that suit, Pop," cautioned John Wilson, "or you'll have everyone after you, thinking a bathing suit is blowing away."

Sergeant Blake had tarried a little longer than the others but at the sound of the hilarious laughter over Pop's appearance, he came up on deck to join in the fun, his face, hands and arms covered with grease and oil.

"We've got to get back to Oakdale tonight," he explained, "and since Pop lost the timing pin from the engine, I took one off one of the small motors they had in the cave but I can't make it fit unless—"

But the boys never found out why the timing pin wouldn't fit for just then the girls came

rushing down to the landing stage and began to clamber aboard the boat, all ready for a swim.

During the next half hour, the island rang with the joyous shouts and laughter of the girls and their masculine guests for the day. Swimming races, diving exhibitions and all the keen, strenuous zest of living that the healthy, happy group put into their fun served to further whet already keen appetites so that when Mrs. Evans blew her whistle and Sergeant Blake, who had succeeded in washing most of the oil and grease off, ordered the boys below decks to dress, they were obeyed with more than usual alacrity.

"After we finish eating," announced Sergeant Blake as the boys and girls arranged themselves in a huge circle before the tents, "I want a couple of you fellows to help me fix that timing pin."

"Taint necessary," chuckled Pop Wilkins, balancing his plate on his knees, "s' fixed. I jes' found th' gosh blame thing when I wuz a-gittin' dressed. Had a hole in m'pocket an' I saw it a-pokin' through m'vest."

"Well, that's a relief," sighed the sergeant. "At least I can have some fun now too!"

The boys helped with the dishes and the general cleaning up of the camp and then commenced a day that would live long in their memories.

Games were played, the island and the caves were thoroughly explored and later in the day, when the sun had dried their bathing suits, everybody went in swimming again.

Supper was an even more substantial affair

than was the ample lunch and as the last morsels of a delicious and thoroughly satisfying and nutritious meal disappeared, Mrs. Evans turned to Sergeant Blake.

"I'm afraid, Sergeant Blake," she smiled, "that I'll have to ask you to do the girls and I a favor."

"Why of course," agreed the sergeant affably. "What is it?"

"When you return to Oakdale," asked Mrs. Evans, "will you order more provisions for us from Mr. Gray? I'm afraid we've eaten up a week's supply already! Pop will bring the stuff out to us, won't you, Pop?"

"Suttin'ly will!" agreed the old man eagerly, glad of another opportunity to visit the island.

The evening was very warm and a bright moon made a camp fire even more unnecessary. The whole island was bathed in the soft silver of the moonlight and as the boys and girls grouped themselves in in the open clearing before the tents, someone began to sing, softly at first and then louder as the others joined in until the whole island rang and the echoes waked with the lusty outpourings of song.

Popular songs were sung until the repertoire of both boys and girls was exhausted and then the girls tried to teach the boys some of their beautiful Camp Fire songs but they reckoned without David Lamb.

Stretched out on the ground, he was, to all appearances, asleep but as soon as the girls finished singing a Camp Fire song, David, in

a deep, melancholy voice, would parody it with words of his own. The idea caught like wildfire and soon everybody was imitating David, parodying all the songs they had sung before.

So the evening passed and when Sergeant Blake who had been in deep and earnest conversation with Mrs. Evans concerning the inestimable value of organizations such as the Camp Fire Girls, suddenly glanced at his watch, it was with a note of surprise in his voice that he addressed the boys.

"I'm sorry fellows," he announced, "but I didn't know it was so late myself. Its eleven thirty. We'd better be getting back to town."

The boys knew it would be useless to argue for permission to stay a little while longer. Ruefully they rose to their feet, goodnights were said and as Alice kissed her father goodbye on the landing stage, a certain young man was heard to sigh softly.

"Oh slush!" gurgled David sarcastically, "somebody wants to be a police sergeant!"

The next moment there was a thump and a clatter and David Lamb vanished from sight. A second later, however, his voice rose from the deck of the launch where he had fallen.

"If the craven coward who is responsible for this outrage," he invited, "will step from the protecting shadows that are blacker than his heart, I'll—"

"Never mind," laughed Sergeant Blake cutting short whatever delights David was about to outline for his unknown antagonist. "We'll settle

the matter when we get back to Oakdale. Pile in, fellows and lets get going."

As the launch swung out into the lake, the girls gathered on the landing stage and sang their farewell song while the boys answered with a song from one of the current musical comedies that was very well adapted to the purpose.

"I'm a-bringin' them thar two canoes back fer ye!" called Pop through his megaphone as the running lights of the launch grew dim in the distance.

As the girls were clearing away their breakfast dishes the following morning, they were surprised to hear the mournful toot of a tugboat approaching the island. Running down to the landing stage, they beheld a crew of workmen swarming out onto the landing stage from a squat, ugly looking little tugboat to which was attached a floating crane.

"We're from the Southwestern Power Company," explained one of the men to Mrs. Evans. "We've come to tear out those dynamos."

Leading the way to the caverns, Mrs. Evans showed the man around the puzzling maze.

"Thats our stuff, alright," one of the men announced after closely inspecting the various pieces of apparatus. "You see," he explained to Mrs. Evans, "the brains of the gang that ran this racket, Luigi Halboro, had all this stuff stolen from time to time from our plants and we never knew what became of it until you and those girls of yours brought about their capture."

"Why how on earth did you know about that?" exclaimed the embarrassed Camp Fire leader with amazement. "It only happened last night."

"Gosh, lady," grinned the crew foreman, "the whole town of Oakdale knows about it! So does our company. The big boss wants you to come up and see him sometime when you get back to town."

Anchoring the tugboat and crane off the rocky end of the island, the men set about the long, hard task of stripping the caverns of its stolen property while the fascinated girls stood about and watched.

The men had been working for perhaps an hour when one of them came out of the cave's entrance bearing a long box, a round drum-like affair of metal and some batteries.

"Here's a radio I found back there," he announced to the surprised girls, "I'll fix you up a small generator and you can use the set as long and as often as you like."

Delighted with the unexpected gift, the girls in appreciation prepared a lunch for the men and although they had their own with them, they ate the meal offered them by the girls with much relish.

That evening, after the workmen had left and the chores for the day were through, the girls gathered around their camp fire and held a Council Meeting with all the ceremony and Indian lore typical of the true Camp Fire spirit.

After the meeting the radio was switched on and as the soft music poured from the speaker

and the fire burned low, the girls' heads began to droop sleepily until presently Mrs. Evans turned off the set and one by one the girls sought their tents.

As the bright moon looks down on the peace and quiet of the camp on Caliban Island, let us leave the sleepings girls to enjoy their two weeks of fun before school opens while we softly steal away.

THE END.